
LEARNING FROM THE SEVEN SOVIET WARS: LESSONS FOR CANADA IN AFGHANISTAN

Captain Nils N. French

In the final days of 1979, the Soviet Union, under the direction of the Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, invaded Afghanistan.¹ Soviet Special Forces and KGB agents assaulted Tajbeg Palace and executed President Hafizullah Amin the evening of December 27th as Soviet ground forces started their entry across the northern border. Brezhnev had decided to intervene when it became clear that Soviet advisory and aviation support to the threatened Afghan government was insufficient. Recent governments had attempted to reform the country too rapidly, making Afghanistan vulnerable to an Islamic overthrow similar to that of Iran. This, combined with numerous other reasons, led Moscow to its decision. Soviet forces faced an immense challenge. It was presented with not only the vast and rough terrain of Afghanistan, but also by its xenophobic Islamic population, which at the time was in a state of civil war. Fighting from ambush sites inherited from their ancestors² and aided by men and materiel from around the world, the Afghan mujahideen fought a protracted insurgency against the Soviets. Although Soviet military forces completed every military task they were assigned, the tactical victories combined to result in strategic failure. Analysis through the lens of an appropriate model clearly demonstrates why.

Our nation, as part of the international community, currently faces a very similar challenge and has approached it in a somewhat similar manner. Although the Soviet experience is often dismissed as a complete failure, referred to only as proof that stability in Afghanistan is unachievable, it offers many lessons. The most important lessons are focused on as an analysis of the Soviet case as compared with an analysis of the current situation. This focus is achieved with the use of the SWORD model, an empirically-developed framework that presents seven dimensions or 'wars' that must be won for a given counterinsurgency effort to succeed. The seven wars are:

- ◆ the legitimacy war;
- ◆ the shooting war;
- ◆ the war to isolate insurgents from internal support;
- ◆ the war to isolate insurgents from external support;
- ◆ the war to stay the course and maintain commitment;
- ◆ the intelligence and information war; and
- ◆ the war for unity of effort.

In the legitimacy war, the shooting war, and the war to stay the course, the considerable advantages and notable achievements of Canada's current effort contrast those of its predecessor. In the other wars, similarities emerge with respect to the challenges faced and the mistakes being made. The advantages that benefit Canada and its allies are presented as are examples of the progress they have made in comparison with the

Soviet approach. More importantly, clear lessons for the Canadian involvement in Afghanistan emerge, allowing leaders to step forward while keeping the past in mind.

The SWORD Model

The effectiveness of the SWORD model originates from the empirical approach used to develop and validate it. In the late 1980s, Max G. Manwaring, current General Douglas McArthur Chair of Research at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, studied 43 post-Second World War insurgencies to distill from them the correlates of success.³ The end result was a set of seven 'dimensions' or 'wars within the war' that could be used to predict the outcome of a counterinsurgency effort. To later test the model, Manwaring partnered with John Fishel and identified 72 variables likely to affect the outcome of an insurgency. He then developed a questionnaire where the importance of each of these variables to the eventual outcome of the insurgency could be rated on a four-point scale. The questionnaire was given to a number of experts that were directly involved in the conflict or had intensely studied its history. Each insurgency was also rated as a win or a loss. This data was then statistically combined and used to test the SWORD model against five other models. The SWORD model rated highest, outscoring the closest competitor by 20 per cent.⁴

Such an approach is rare, but vital when attempting to study such a vast collective experience. Works on counterinsurgency are often based on a single conflict. Other works look at several different counterinsurgencies and the author judges which elements are the most important, often selecting common factors based on their individual merit, rather than their value as part of an integrated whole. Doctrine attempts to overcome this by combining the lessons of great swaths of military experience and the works of numerous different authors, thus inheriting the faults mentioned above. Military leaders or decision-makers can choose to focus on certain elements of doctrine more than others, distorting doctrine while locked in the "wise of previous (and often limited) experience."⁵

Manwaring did not theorize any of the dimensions of the model. He and John Fishel have indicated that the model is "original only in the way that the dimensions were combined and in how they were derived and tested."⁶ Those that may be inclined to see the model as too abstract and academic in nature, perhaps proclaiming themselves as more 'reality-oriented,' are thus forced to accept that the only academic element was the actual method of refining the collective decades of field experience that form its source data.

At the same time, Manwaring was mindful of the fact that "every conflict is situation-specific" but also contended that no situation is entirely unique.⁷ For the development of the model he therefore focused on the "analytical commonalities"⁸ of counterinsurgencies. In addition, the common elements are often those that are large-scale and most important; the elements that are uncommon between situations are typically less important.

The SWORD model (or Manwaring Paradigm) has been tested time and time again. Early analysis validated the model, showing it capable of correctly predicting the outcome of a counterinsurgency nine times out of ten,⁹ with the tenth usually being some obvious anomaly.¹⁰ More than two decades of use have further polished and tested the model since. In the words of the model's creators: "Although the model has been refined over the years, we have not been able to refute it. And we have certainly tried."¹¹

In short, evidence demonstrates that a challenged government must adhere to the dimensions of the SWORD model if it wishes to defeat a given insurgency. The

converse is also true; failure to do so will result in the eventual failure of the challenged government and those that have come to its aid.¹²

Approach

This paper will first seek to point out where Canada and its allies have considerable advantages and have made considerable progress over the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. More importantly, the paper will draw from the Soviet experience the most salient lessons for Canada and its allies. The seven dimensions or seven 'wars' of the SWORD model will be used to narrow the focus onto the elements that are most critical.

When discussing Soviet involvement, the term *mujahideen* will be used to describe both the local and foreign fighters that fought the Soviet presence. The term is meant to include both the rebel fighters and also everyday Afghans who sought to protect their local tribal interests. The term Soviet security forces will be used to describe all elements of the Soviet Army, Navy, and Air Force, and will also include the KGB and other paramilitary elements.

When discussing Canadian and international involvement, to prevent the oversimplification that would result from the use of solely "al Qaeda" or "Taliban", I will borrow the term "anti-government forces" (AGF) from Colonel Thomas Hammes' *The Sling and the Stone* to describe the mélange of actors that we are countering in Afghanistan.¹³ The term will be used to describe the full spectrum of al Qaeda, Taliban, warlords and their militias, smugglers, drug dealers and others seeking personal gain, as well as personnel working covertly for foreign powers. Afghan citizens that have turned to violence out of frustration, revenge, or anger and actors that American General Robert Durbin labels "anti-change forces," which is to say any other actor wishing to preserve the status quo, are also included.¹⁴

Furthermore, the term "international security forces" will refer to troops of both the NATO ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission and the US-led OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom), including all Canadian troops. The term "Afghan security forces" is used to describe the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, and other elements like the Afghan Border Guards.

The Legitimacy War

For the legitimacy war to be won, a supported government requires a high degree of domestic support, the ability to govern its people, a low perception of corruption, and a low incidence rate of political violence (indicating that issues were instead resolved through the democratic process)¹⁵. Statistical analysis of the SWORD model has firmly established the primacy of this dimension.¹⁶ The war that the Afghan government fought to preserve and increase its legitimacy was (during the Soviet war) and is (for our war) the most important of all seven. The Soviet-supported government lost the war for legitimacy in Afghanistan but Canada and its allies have considerable advantages in this war.

During the Soviet war, the Afghan government had little domestic legitimacy. The President, Babrak Karmal, was illegitimately put in power by the Soviets and was widely regarded as a puppet of the USSR.¹⁷ When looking at the current situation, the importance of Karzai's election in October of 2004 (with a voter turnout of 80%) cannot be understated.¹⁸ Karzai won with 55% of the vote, far ahead of his nearest competitor, establishing a legitimacy that the transitional government, or any government before it, did not have. Candidates agreed that these elections were free and fair, despite some minor discrepancies of process.¹⁹ Elections held for the National Assembly and provincial council were conducted in September 2005 and continued the momentum.

This presents a marked departure from the Soviet experience.

The legitimacy of intervening international powers must also be considered, as their legitimacy affects the legitimacy of the Afghan government by association. Moscow asserted that Afghanistan had asked for Soviet military assistance, but the Afghan government was under their full control.²⁰ Regardless of what reasons the Soviet Union gave for their involvement, be it the request for assistance or several other possible reasons, the invasion was seen as illegitimate by the international community and the USSR paid a heavy price for its actions over the next several years.²¹ Specifically, the Soviets were condemned by an overwhelming vote in the UN General Assembly immediately following the invasion and a resolution was passed calling for their withdrawal. The general Assembly continued with similar efforts through the entire conflict. Military action was ruled out by the use of the Soviet veto in the Security Council, but the illegitimacy of the Soviet actions (and the Afghan government by association) was obvious.

The legitimacy of the involvement of Canada and its allies is quite different. In Afghanistan, both Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO began operations under UN mandates; the two were established under resolutions 1368 and 1386 respectively. Other resolutions followed and the Security Council continues to be actively involved with efforts in Afghanistan. Broad participation on the part of the international community, particularly with respect to the NATO mission,²² also serves to increase the legitimacy of the international involvement in Afghanistan.

Another problem during the Soviet war was the very limited ability of the government to govern its people. Given Afghanistan's physical and social terrain, little more than control of the main cities was accomplished at the best of times. The same challenge exists to some degree today, but international assistance has helped considerably in expanding government influence. Corruption was also a problem: members of the poorly disciplined Soviet military were frequently using their positions for personal gain;²³ and the same was true of the Afghan regime in power.²⁴ This problem persists, but is less pronounced. Militaries are now a positive influence as opposed to a negative one in this regard. Political violence, including numerous assassinations of public figures and attacks on government forces and infrastructure were widespread during the Soviet occupation²⁵ and the same problem exists now. The solution to this last issue will not be direct and improvements in other areas will best remedy the situation.

The relative advantages that Canada and its allies hold in this war are considerable. UN mandates, the democratic election of President Karzai and the expanding ability of Kabul to govern the nation present a sharp contrast to the situation the Soviets faced.

The Shooting War

This dimension of the counterinsurgency deals directly with the intervening and domestic security forces. The model indicates several key guidelines for both. Considering the intervening forces, the data indicate that the use of relatively small numbers of foreign troops in primarily a support and training role will win this war.²⁶ The SWORD model requires that domestic security forces be well trained and highly-disciplined, willing to take casualties, and capable of effective small-unit tactics if they are to contribute positively to overall chances of success in the shooting war.²⁷ The Soviets lost the shooting war in Afghanistan, but Canada and its allies are doing much better.

With respect to the intervening Soviet forces, several elements of the occupation went against the tenets of the SWORD model. First, a large force was employed. Soviet troop strength has been reported as somewhere from ninety to one hundred thousand

and the total rises to more than two hundred thousand if one includes civilian advisors stationed in Afghanistan, other forces that were part of the operations but garrisoned in the USSR, and the airmen that flew from airbases in Soviet territory across into Afghan airspace.²⁸ Furthermore, although attempts were made to remain in a training and support role, the majority of Soviet troops were heavily engaged in combat.

With respect to the current situation, OEF and NATO have kept the number of troops in country below fifty thousand²⁹ and recent operations have shown a transition toward Afghan troops leading with international forces in support.³⁰ By keeping the troop count down to less than one half of what the Soviets had in theatre and by more effectively transitioning those troops to a support and training role, Canada and its allies appear more like an assistant than an occupier.

The troop numbers have, however, been increasing since the outset, mostly because building the necessary political will and military infrastructure is a long process. It will be important for the international community to gradually reduce troop strength as the Afghan government becomes stronger. It can easily be argued that the forces are required for security in the absence of a fully-capable Afghan force, but steady troop increases indicate that leaders perceive the problem as being primarily military in nature, which it is not. The SWORD model indicates the chances for failure of a counterinsurgency effort increase as the military actions of intervening powers become more intense and voluminous.³¹

When considering the indigenous Afghan army during the Soviet war, we must first consider the fact that they were trained by Soviet troops. If, by the SWORD model, troops had to be well-disciplined and highly-trained, the *undisciplined* and *poorly-trained* Soviet conscripts were likely not the best instructors. The result was an Afghan army that quickly lost half of its authorized ninety thousand men, primarily to desertion, in the early half of the war.³²

The present-day Afghan security forces are developing slowly but surely. The Afghan National Army (ANA) currently has a total of more than thirty thousand troops and is growing at a rate of one thousand per month with expectations for the final target of seventy thousand to be attained by 2009.³³ The ANA, despite some difficulties, including vulnerabilities to insurgent penetration and problems with junior leaders, is faring relatively well as an indigenous force when compared to those of other countries dealing with Islamist insurgency.³⁴ Canadian forces have credited them with impressive bravery and resolve.³⁵

Although training is cited as weak,³⁶ the expansion of the Afghan National Police (ANP) is also on track, with the force now numbering thirty-seven thousand.³⁷ The police force has seen a reduction of corruption through wage increases,³⁸ a rapidly increasing experience base and continual learning through close relations with professional international security forces. Billions of dollars of new equipment is arriving and will be phased in to meet requirements.³⁹

On the whole, Canada and its allies are ahead of their predecessors in the shooting war. With fewer troops in theatre, and with those troops performing more of a training and support role, chances for success are higher. Comparatively, more progress has also been made in developing Afghan security forces.

The War to Isolate the Insurgents Internally

To win this war, the intervening powers and the host government need to isolate the insurgents from their national and local sources of support and deny them sanctuary within Afghanistan's borders. The Soviets made some progress in this area, but lost this particular war. Canada and its allies have been having problems as well.

As with many insurgencies, the Afghan insurgency against the Soviets was internally supplied by locals that were supportive of the insurgent cause. Villagers would supply food, water, medical treatment, shelter and sometimes weaponry to the mujahideen as they traveled to complete their missions against the Soviets. Knowing this, the Soviets sought to both depopulate areas of the country and eliminate food production, thus “draining the pond” so that the “fish” could be caught. The Soviets bombed granaries, villages, destroyed crops and irrigation systems, mined fields and pastures and slaughtered herds of animals.⁴⁰ The entire agricultural system was essentially destroyed.⁴¹ These efforts did bring some success in this war, with the mujahideen approaching famine in some areas from 1985-1986,⁴² but the negative impact on the intelligence and information war far overshadowed any gain. Furthermore, losses in the intelligence and information war led the local population that remained to support the mujahideen, essentially bringing things full circle.

In the present situation, the Afghan population is shifting closer and closer to the government side, which sees them supporting the AGF less and less. The only possible exception is the southern ‘Pashto belt,’ which includes Kandahar province. In the Pashto belt there have been several challenges to government control in the last few years. Difficulties encountered in the Pashto belt also come as result of a certain ideological sympathy and the shared ethnicity and religious beliefs between the Taliban and the local tribes of these areas.

Other sources of support and supply for the mujahideen included Soviet troops trading their weapons to obtain drugs,⁴³ Afghan army deserters who left with weapons and ammunition,⁴⁴ and large quantities of arms, supplies, and even vehicles that were captured in frequent convoy attacks.⁴⁵ Furthermore, heavy Soviet bombing throughout the war had the side effect of littering the country with unexploded ordnance. The mujahideen would then use these munitions against the Soviet and Afghan troops, detonating them under bridges, viaducts, and roads as convoys passed by. Soviet mines were carefully dug up from known minefields by the mujahideen fighters and replanted elsewhere with the same devastating effect.⁴⁶

Looking at the current situation, the discipline of the international security forces is much higher and trading weapons for drugs is unheard of. The Afghan army has fewer problems with desertion than in the past, and anti-government forces rarely capture supplies from security forces. The amount of bombing being done is minimal and the percentage of munitions that fail to detonate (also known as the ‘dud rate’) is much lower. In fact, unexploded ordnance and land mines are being disposed of by security forces and humanitarian agencies with over two million pieces of UXO and thirty thousand mines disposed of in 2005 alone.⁴⁷

Leaving support from the population to be discussed later, the trend in this war is opposite to that which the Soviets faced. Soviet military activities increased internal supply for the mujahideen in unforeseen ways, Canada and her allies are steadily reducing it.

The War to Isolate the Insurgents Externally

This war’s objective is to isolate the insurgents from regional and international sources of support. This is best accomplished early in the conflict and is won when they have limited sanctuary outside the country and are isolated from their main sources of external support. On the whole, the Soviets lost this war. Canada and her allies are losing as well.

The major conduit of external support for the Afghan insurgency was and still is through Pakistan. The border was not closed off by the Soviets during the conflict,

although attempts were made,⁴⁸ including the use of scatterable mines.⁴⁹ The mountainous terrain and sheer vastness of the border area made the task extremely difficult, and the same challenges exist today. Notwithstanding Soviet efforts, arms, personnel and supplies continued to flow.

The current situation is similar. Although Pakistan has made efforts to secure the border areas, the Pakistani government surrendered almost all influence in the border areas by withdrawing its forces in September of 2006.⁵⁰ Pakistan aside, US forces have made progress in the area, although mostly within Afghan territory,⁵¹ and are putting forth an increased effort for border security.⁵² Unfortunately, if the Pakistani Army could not close off the border with upwards of one hundred thousand troops in the area, then Afghan and international security forces much more limited in numbers will likely not be able to either. When the freedom of action that the AGF and their allies now have in the border regions on the Pakistan side is combined with the porous thousand-mile border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the insurgency has an open supply line of men and materiel and the capacity to cross over into sanctuary as needed. The prevalence of violence in the Pashto belt, which lies along the border with Pakistan, quickly demonstrates the end effect.

During the previous conflict, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and China⁵³ were the major supporters of the mujahideen. The massive influx had a noticeable effect on mujahideen assets; for example, the Panjshir valley was defended by thirteen heavy machine guns in 1982 and by two hundred just two years later.⁵⁴ China provided anti-aircraft guns, machine guns,⁵⁵ and mortars. The United States cooperated with Egypt⁵⁶ and Pakistan to supply small arms, rocket-propelled mine-clearing charges,⁵⁷ stinger and SA-7 surface-to-air missiles (in 1986), and mortars.⁵⁸ External support of this nature is reported to have started as early as 1980.⁵⁹ Military equipment items including sleeping bags, blankets, and boots were also provided.⁶⁰ In fact, some factions of the mujahideen were so well resourced that Soviet soldiers were known to pillage the dead mujahideen after firefights for supplies.⁶¹ The insurgent forces in the current conflict do not enjoy the support of a major world power and the impressive supply that this would provide, although a number of non-state actors do provide support.

Canada and her allies do profit from a degree of advantage given that no international power supports the AGF as was the case for the Soviets, but support provided by non-state entities still flows relatively freely across the Durand Line. This supply must be severed. The Soviet experience offers clear lessons for the war to isolate insurgents externally.

The War to Stay the Course

Success in this war is achieved through the sustained support of the threatened government by the intervening power. Key elements include consistent military support and a high degree of long-term overall commitment. Experience shows that when aid is withdrawn, the likelihood of success is greatly reduced.⁶² This war was lost by the Soviets, but is being won by Canada and its allies.

The overriding factor with respect to this dimension was the complete Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Starting in October of 1988, troops were pulled out in two phases, with the last troops leaving in February of 1989.⁶³ The withdrawal came during the tenure of Mikhail Gorbachev, who had ordered victory in 1985 upon taking power.⁶⁴ Victory seemed impossible and orders were given to bring the troops home in 1986. Reasons included a lack of overall progress and low domestic support for the war. From a military perspective, the Soviet brass had requested withdrawal continually since the early years of the conflict.⁶⁵ The withdrawal of Soviet troops and most of the Soviet assistance paved the way for continued civil war and the capitulation of the Afghan government three years later.

Canada and its allies face the same 'asymmetry of stakes' that the Soviet Union did. In essence, winning means everything to the AGF and much, much less to the citizens of the troop contributing nations that are thousands of miles away.⁶⁶ The most critical element of this dimension is the popularity of the Afghan mission amongst the voting public. The stated goals of terrorism prevention and international security seem to have resisted public scrutiny rather well and are perhaps what keep the political will alive. Without such elements of national interest, the humanitarian appeal of the mission alone would likely be insufficient to maintain the necessary support and tolerance for casualties.⁶⁷ Governments have stressed the terrorism and international security aspects accordingly and must continue to do so. Leaders of troop-contributing nations have also been forthcoming, ensuring their populations realize that restoring stability to Afghanistan will take not years, but decades. They have also prepared them for the potential deaths of their soldiers. This shows that the politicians understand that a sustained long-term effort is required and also prepares the public for what will hopefully be a lasting effort.

Although the SWORD model holds that the outcome of any counterinsurgency is not determined primarily by the military battles that are fought,⁶⁸ one aspect of these battles does have a major (albeit indirect) impact on this dimension: the number of casualties. The military success that is important here is not so much the defeat of enemy forces, but minimizing casualties among our own troops while they attempt to do so. Here we can notice a major difference between the current experience and the Soviet experience. Current casualties in Afghanistan are in the area of five thousand and there have been five hundred fatalities (all nations). Total Soviet tally consisted of *four hundred thousand* taken casualty by injury or disease (typhoid and hepatitis were rampant) and fatalities in the area of *fifteen thousand*.⁶⁹ Advances in force protection, training, tactics, and medical countermeasures and treatment are partly responsible and the current operation is much more politically sustainable as a result.

Canada and her allies have suffered far fewer casualties and up to this point have been relatively steadfast in their support, maintaining or expanding their commitment as they move past the point in time where the Soviet government decided to withdraw. This, if continued, provides a considerable advantage in the war to stay the course.

The Intelligence and Information War

This war aims to win the support of the population and gain intelligence that will lead to the defeat of insurgent forces and their operational and leadership structures. In the information war, the security forces must counter the insurgents without alienating the local population.⁷⁰ If conducted successfully, the information war will often lead to success in the intelligence war by increasing the likelihood of support from the local population who will be more inclined to provide critical information to security forces. When analyzing the Soviet experience in Afghanistan, one notices a token attempt to gain support of the Afghan people that was far overshadowed by several overriding actions that lost this war for the Soviets. Canada and its allies have made a considerable effort to gain the support of Afghans but must still make improvements when it comes to keeping the support of the population.

Having some understanding of the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the people, the Soviet/Afghan forces took some actions with this in mind. Orphanages were built, medical treatment was provided, civil affairs teams were used, and entertainment was planned for villages.⁷¹ The Soviets also distributed food and other supplies.⁷² Furthermore, having understood the negative stigma surrounding communist atheistic beliefs, the Soviets ensured that Islam was guaranteed preservation as a sacred religion in Afghanistan's constitution while at the same time working to repair mosques, build Islamic schools, and give extra funding and supplies to religious leaders.⁷³

While it is certain that these actions increased support for the Soviet and the Afghan government forces, their positive impact was eliminated by both collateral damage and the intentional damage to fields and villages mentioned earlier in this paper. Over the course of the war 1.3 million Afghans were killed,⁷⁴ 4 million became refugees, and 2 million were internally displaced.⁷⁵ As a result, the Afghan population was reduced to one-eighth of its pre-war numbers.⁷⁶ All of this came primarily as result of Soviet attacks and destruction, most often in the form of indiscriminate bombing as the Soviets opted to use firepower instead of men.⁷⁷ The atrocities gave the mujahideen the will to fight, motivated the population to support them, and eliminated any possibility of gaining vital human intelligence.

In terms of reconstruction, Canada and her allies have completed projects similar to those completed by the Soviets, albeit on a much greater scale. In Kandahar alone, 700 local projects have been completed by community development councils empowered by the international community. Canada's contribution includes more than 1,000 wells, drainage and irrigation works, 150km of roads and bridges, generators and power lines, and schools and health clinics.⁷⁸

The goodwill generated by these projects cannot be understated, but it can be undermined. Collateral damage, no matter how limited, will have some degree of negative impact on the information war (and the associated intelligence war). A senior Afghan minister described the effects best when he indicated that "every time there is a bombardment in the south, it affects the credibility of the Afghan government."⁷⁹

Furthermore, the Afghan poppy fields that fuel the opium industry have either been destroyed or are believed to be threatened with this fate. As a result, the local population has either lost or is at risk of losing what they believe to be their only viable livelihood given the current situation in the troubled country. This has resulted in a resistance to government control followed by an increased acceptance of the AGF who in turn serve to protect crops from government destruction.⁸⁰ The Soviets destroyed crops that the Afghans needed for food; some of the forces in Afghanistan now are burning crops that the Afghans need for income to buy food. The end result is the same.

The Soviet-Afghan war demonstrated that collateral damage can have negative effects that far outweigh their tactical gain. Although Canada and its allies have exercised restraint far beyond that of their predecessors, a greater advantage can be gained by further adjusting the approach.

The War for Unity of Effort

Winning the war for unity of effort requires that parties involved with countering the insurgency cooperate for success. Those involved primarily include the host nation, the intervening power or powers and the different military elements. All of these actors are interconnected in numerous ways. If authority becomes ineffective and fragmented, problems become much more difficult to resolve and failure will likely follow.⁸¹ The Soviets lost the war for unity of effort in Afghanistan, Canada and her allies are facing a similar fate.

Regarding the Soviet war, reports expose incidents of Afghan military officers both subverting the regime and refusing to cooperate; at one point the entire leadership of the Intelligence Directorate of the Afghan Ministry of Defence was arrested for collaborating with the enemy.⁸² It should be noted that the minimal respect that the Soviet commanders had for indigenous troops had some role in this as well.⁸³

While it is difficult to judge the current situation without being on the ground, a series of shootings where Afghan security forces were mistakenly targeted by Canadian and other international forces indicate less than ideal relations. The separate OEF and NATO chains of command also cause problems for unity of effort. Even within these

chains of command, there is friction between contributing nations, primarily with respect to the restrictive rules of engagement assigned to some contingents. To add to all of this, private military companies operate under their own profit-oriented agenda.

There were problems within the Soviet government systems as well. The Soviet Union never had a central office in charge of the various delegations of its ministries. The chiefs of the KGB, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence all acted autonomously. The delegations sent "contradictory information back to Moscow and received conflicting orders in return."⁸⁴ The cooperation between the parties involved was much less than ideal.

The Canadian government has suffered similar difficulties, with Ottawa's reactions to the Afghan mission having been described as "fitful" by Professor Douglas Bland, Chair of the Defence Management Program at Queen's University.⁸⁵ Dr. Bland also noted that the government is "not ready for the whole of government approach." Dr. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Opposition, made similar observations, noting that the government has failed to bring together defence, diplomacy, and development. He notes that in Kandahar CIDA is not integrated and does not seem to want to be and that there is no single Canadian authority for all Canadian efforts in the country.⁸⁶ With respect to the last comment, an Associate Deputy Minister has since been appointed as the previously lacking authority, although this will not compensate for the six years spent without one. The nearly two thousand non-governmental organizations in the country are also a source of friction, sometimes finding themselves at odds with military forces and in other instances finding themselves at odds with the government of Afghanistan.⁸⁷ There is little that the government can do to easily resolve this particular issue, even if there is one single Canadian government authority.

In the current war for unity of effort, it is difficult to discern any advantage or progress over the Soviets. It could be said that the current effort is just as fragmented, indicating that this war's lesson has not been learned.

Conclusion

The SWORD model provides a proven framework for the analysis of counterinsurgencies. Its application has clearly demonstrated why the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan at the hands of the mujahideen insurgency and is a valid framework upon which to base a comparison of the defeat to the current situation.

Effects of the Afghan war still reverberate in Russia and the former states of the Soviet Union today. To avoid a similar fate, Canada and its allies must push for further gains in three of the seven wars: the war to isolate insurgents from external support, the intelligence and information war, and the war for unity of effort. This being said, Canada and its allies profit from considerable advantages in most areas and have made a great deal of progress. If we build upon our strengths, and apply the lessons of our predecessors, success in Afghanistan may still be a possibility. Furthermore, if we can achieve success in a situation as challenging as this, we can achieve success elsewhere in the years to come. Success in Afghanistan is not only important to Afghanistan.

About the Author...

Captain Nils N. French, Canadian Military Engineers, is currently stationed at the U.S. Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, where he was recently recognized as the school's Instructor of the Year. Captain French graduated from the Royal Military College of Canada in 2002 with a degree in Civil Engineering. He is currently completing a Masters of Military Studies in Unconventional Warfare from American Military University. Over the past year, Captain French has published work with the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, the *Canadian Army Journal*, and the *US Army Engineer Professional Bulletin*. He has also presented at symposiums of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, the International Studies Association, and the Canadian Institute for International Affairs. His research interests include counterinsurgency and contemporary conflict.

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