

Insurgency Literature Review

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[Article 1](#) “Playing for the Breaks: Insurgent Mistakes,” by Lincoln B. Krause, [Parameters](#) (U.S. Army War College), Vol. 29, No. 3, Autumn 2009. *Insurgent leaders commit strategic mistakes that can significantly retard their efforts, and if properly leveraged by counterinsurgent forces, may lead to the insurgents’ defeat. Despite the pivotal role these mistakes play in the trajectory of internal conflicts, they have been afforded little attention in academic and practitioner literature. This article seeks to fill that void by establishing a typology of insurgent strategic errors, outlining a framework for understanding when certain mistakes are made, and offering a brief case study to help illustrate the typology and timing framework.*

[Article 2](#) “Narcoterrorism: How Has Narcoterrorism Settled in Mexico?” By Fernando Celaya Pacheco, [Studies in Conflict and Terrorism](#), Vol. 32, No. 12, December 2009. *Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the leadership of the Mexican drug cartels was nationalistic and entrepreneurial, focusing their efforts specifically on the profitable U.S. drug consumption market. Their goal was to subvert the Mexican state, not challenge it. Today the various Mexican cartels appear to be headless, bereft of any leadership, or led by thugs who have no allegiances and have begun focusing their enterprises on the increasing national drug consumption demand. This has caused anarchy within the different cartels’ ranks resulting in an unprecedented escalation of drug-related violence that qualifies as narcoterrorism. The Mexican state is challenged directly for control over the legitimate use of force and seems unable to rein in the uncontrolled level of violence.*

[Article 3](#) “Balochistan: Unrelenting Insurgency,” by Kanchan Lakshman, [South Asia Intelligence Review](#), Vol. 8, No. 20, 23 November 2009. *The strategic and resource-rich Balochistan province continues to remain on the periphery of Pakistan’s projects and perceptions. With both the dialogue and the counterinsurgency operations failing, the Baloch insurrection persists. Worse, subversion from the Taliban-Al-Qaeda in the north of the province has added to the region’s complexities. Balochistan has the weakest long-term growth performance of all provinces in Pakistan. This fact only confirms the long-standing disparities between Balochistan and the other provinces, especially Punjab, and underlines the deep disconnect between Balochistan and the rest of the country, and also the resentment of the Baloch. Clearly, a lasting solution to the long-standing Baloch rebellion looks highly unlikely in the proximate future.*

[Article 4](#) “The Familiar Road to Failure in Afghanistan,” by Rodric Braithwaite, [Financial Times](#), 22 December 2009. *On Christmas day 1979, 30 years ago, Soviet forces poured into Afghanistan. Two days later Soviet special forces killed President Hafizullah Amin in his Kabul palace. The world united against this latest example of cynical and ruthless Soviet imperial aggression against a small neighbor. Financial, economic, and military assistance to the growing insurgency flooded in from Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States, and Britain. Nine years later, on 15 February 1989, the Soviets withdrew, a superpower humiliated by a rag-tag army of pious peasant fighters armed by U.S. congressman Charlie Wilson with the Stinger missiles that drove the Soviet battle helicopters out of the sky. Thus the myth. The reality was more complicated.*

[Article 5](#) “The Soviet Victory That Never Was: What the United States Can Learn from the Soviet War in Afghanistan,” by **Nikolas K. Gvosdev**, *Foreign Affairs*, 10 December 2009.

Could the Soviet Union have won its war in Afghanistan? Today, the victory of the anti-Soviet mujahideen seems preordained as part of the West’s ultimate triumph in the Cold War. To suggest that an alternative outcome was possible—and that the United States has something to learn from the Soviet Union’s experience in Afghanistan—may be controversial. But to avoid being similarly frustrated by the infamous “graveyard of empires,” U.S. military planners would be wise to study how the Soviet Union nearly emerged triumphant from its decade-long war.

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1. “Playing for the Breaks: Insurgent Mistakes,” by **Lincoln B. Krause**, *Parameters* (U.S. Army War College), Vol. 29, No. 3, Autumn 2009. [KBTITheory, KBTIHistory, KBTIStrategies, KBTIIraqCase] Lincoln B. Krause is a U.S. government analyst who has focused on low-intensity conflict issues for much of his career. He is a graduate of the National War College. This article was originally produced during his studies at the National War College. We quote from <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/Parameters/09autumn/krause.pdf>:

. . . Insurgent leaders commit strategic mistakes that can significantly retard their efforts, and if properly leveraged by counterinsurgent forces, may lead to the insurgents’ defeat. Despite the pivotal role these mistakes play in the trajectory of internal conflicts, they have been afforded little attention in academic and practitioner literature. This article seeks to fill that void by **establishing a typology of insurgent strategic errors, outlining a framework for understanding when certain mistakes are made, and offering a brief case study to help illustrate the typology and timing framework.**

In a 1989 interview, the iconic counterinsurgent **Robert Thompson outlined an optimum, three-part counterinsurgency strategy consisting of emplacing programs to address the root causes of an insurgency, ensuring the programs are sustainable, and “playing for the breaks.”** Breaks, according to Thompson, entail changes in the situation on the international, national, and local levels, and these changes—especially those at the national and local levels—**are often generated by critical errors made by an insurgency’s leaders.**

. . . An insurgency is a risky and highly complex human activity susceptible to a range of mistakes by its protagonists. It is safe to say there has never been a mistake-free insurgency. The defeat of insurgents in Greece in the 1940s, Oman in the 1970s, and Egypt in the 1990s, along with other historical examples, demonstrate the criticality of strategic mistakes on the outcome of internal conflicts. Indeed, **the 2007 turnaround in**

the Sunni Arab insurgency in Iraq was propelled by insurgent mistakes that were deftly leveraged by U.S. forces.

. . . [Virtually] no attention has been given in academic and practitioner literature to the incidence and function of insurgent mistakes. This article examines the following implications for counterinsurgency strategists with regard to such errors: [a] **Insurgents make strategic mistakes that may retard their efforts, and if properly leveraged by counterinsurgent forces, may lead to their defeat.** [b] **These mistakes are often made at strategic junctures in a conflict.** [c] **Through an understanding of possible insurgent mistakes and when mistakes manifest themselves, a counterinsurgent force will be better prepared to exploit these errors or weaknesses.** [d] **The role of insurgent mistakes and the criticality of leveraging them requires that the concept be incorporated in doctrinal updates.**

A typology of insurgent mistakes

Insurgent strategic mistakes, those that can dramatically retard or doom a movement, come in two basic forms: “original sins” and “situational miscalculations.” **Original sins are fundamental errors in the initial design of an insurgency.** These mistakes, which handicap a movement from its start, **include failing to adopt a viable cause, poor selection of operational terrain, restricting mobilization to a narrow ethnic or sectarian group, and adopting a strategy unsuited to goals, terrain, or opponent.**

This article, however, is concerned with situational miscalculations. These are mistakes that are made by insurgent leaders during the course of an insurgency and principally involve decisions regarding intermediate objectives and tactics to be employed. **Most mistakes in this category have a common root in overreach.** Simply put, **insurgent leaders overestimate their own capacity with respect to the level of popular support for the movement and the government’s capacity and willingness to respond in a forceful and effective manner.** These mistakes often stem from impatience or are driven by hubris built from initial success. . . .

Ten situational miscalculations commonly made by insurgent leaders

Imprudent armed actions. **An insurgent group’s initial armed action can create its most dangerous moments.** The emerging insurgent organization often lacks internal or external sanctuaries, significant popular support, a developed clandestine infrastructure, a resilient leadership structure, or security practices capable of surviving concerted government action. Consequently, **insurgents who misjudge the strength of their movement, the impact of their initial actions, and the government’s capacity to respond often result in a government counteraction they are not prepared to withstand.** Such a miscalculation will doom a movement or hamper its growth. . . .

Zealotry. Zealotry entails insurgent organizations imposing, often by force, social customs and mores that are alien to the local populace. **Once insurgent-imposed values threaten the social fabric or livelihood of a population, that citizenry may turn against the insurgency, negating efforts to build support or tolerance.** . . .

Dysfunctional terror. **The exercise of terror can be a useful tactic for insurgents.** Counterinsurgent practitioner and theorist David Galula observed, **“Persuasion brings a minority of supporters . . . but force rallies the rest.”** As the example of the Algerian

National Liberation Front showed, the insurgents effectively used terror not only to control broad sectors of the populace, but also to provoke overreaction by the French security forces. **Insurgents, however, often overemphasize the application of terror and violate Galula's dictum of never antagonizing "at any one time more people than can be handled."** This dysfunctional terror manifests itself through sustained terror campaigns against a potentially supportive population or through high-profile terror attacks that are so disproportionate that they alienate large segments of the society. . . .

Exporting terror. Conducting terror on foreign soil, if targets and the reaction of the population of the counterinsurgency power are miscalculated, can boomerang on an insurgent movement. For example, Chechen insurgents sought to extend their war beyond the Caucasus into Russia proper, hoping, according to one researcher, "that large-scale terrorist acts in [Russia would] turn public sentiment against the war." **Hostage-taking attacks on the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow in 2002 and a school in Beslan in 2004, however, actually boosted Russian popular support for a hard-line approach toward Chechnya.** Additionally, the Chechen terrorist actions **drew international condemnation and sanctions.** For example, the United States, citing the 2002 theater attack, designated several Chechen groups as foreign terrorist organizations.

Overreliance on external support. Although state support to insurgencies has declined since the end of the Cold War, it still "has a profound impact on the effectiveness" of movements, according to a 2001 RAND study on trends in support to insurgencies. The report highlighted the fact that **state support is rendered for realpolitik objectives [versus] any genuine affinity for the insurgency's goals.** As such, state support, including provision of sanctuary, can be withdrawn if the policy priorities of the supporting nation change. **If an insurgent movement fails to diversify its sources of support**—for example, by drawing on diasporas, other non-state groups, and indigenous sources—**it may become vulnerable to any rapid withdrawal of state support.** The Kurdish insurgency in Iraq collapsed in 1975 when the Kurds' principal supporter, Iran, reached a diplomatic accommodation with Iraq. Deprived of arms, supplies, and sanctuary, the Kurdish insurgency crumbled within two weeks.

Holding ground. Defending territory against even a moderately capable counterinsurgency force can lead to military disaster for an insurgency. Insurgents may opt to abandon guerrilla warfare and try to hold ground because of a location's symbolic importance—for example, its status as a "capital" of an ethnic enclave—or because of its utility as a base area or logistics hub. . . .

Conventional orientation. Insurgent organizations are sometimes tempted to convert irregular fighters into conventional forces in an attempt to confront government forces on equal terms. If the insurgents misread their capacity, especially their logistics and command and control capabilities, or miscalculate government weakness, they often suffer defeats that reverse years of growth. **In addition to risking military defeat, conventional orientation for an insurgent movement can cause an organization to deemphasize the political aspects of its struggle.** . . .

High stakes offensive. A major offensive designed to dramatically change the character of a conflict carries great risk for an insurgent movement. Much like a mistimed conventional military operation, insurgencies risk their manpower, logistics, and momentum. . . . [Failed] campaigns also **can cripple mobilization capability**

required for future endeavors, expose hard-to-build infrastructures, and reveal the lack of popular support for the insurgent movement. . . .

Security lapse. A security failure at a critical juncture in a movement's operation can cripple an insurgency, especially if the lapse exposes the organization's infrastructure and leadership. In 1950, the Communist-dominated Hukbalahap (Huk) insurgency in the Philippines suffered when its Manila-based infrastructure was compromised and its files captured. Similarly, in Peru the Shining Path's top leadership and the organization's computer records were seized in a 1992 raid in Lima. These raids weakened the insurgencies and provided the host governments with sufficient time to organize and improve counterinsurgency capabilities. . . .

Enmeshing in crime. Many, perhaps most, insurgencies develop and leverage criminal activities to help fund an insurgency. The decision to make criminal proceeds a principal means of funding, however, carries significant risks. **The greatest danger is that the means—crime—will supplant the ends of the movement and become its raison d'être. Ideology, and more importantly the mobilization of the populace to back the insurgency, may assume secondary importance. Cohesion and discipline also can suffer.** The experience of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) provides an excellent example of the perils of enmeshing a movement in crime. The FARC leadership opted to tap Colombia's illicit drug trade in 1982 Relying on the criminal industry distanced the FARC from its popular base and removed one of the basic tenets underpinning the organization, reliance on the population for support.

The timing of mistakes

. . . **Many of the situational miscalculations previously described appear, based on limited case study analysis, to cluster at common strategic junctures directly linked to various stages of the insurgency's development.** Of course, each insurgency develops in its own unique manner, causing the manifestation of insurgent mistakes to vary accordingly. **The correlation between mistakes and strategic junctures, however, provides an opportunity for counterinsurgents to anticipate the possibility for errors by the various organizations.**

Early mistakes. Imprudent early armed actions fit within this stage, as occurred when insurgencies such as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Egyptian radical Islamists miscalculated the government's reaction to their initial acts. **Some insurgencies opt to attempt to shorten the conflict and take advantage of perceived government weakness by launching a high stakes offensive.** These often take the form of major offensives initiated at the outset of an insurgency **Many of these offensives overestimate both the government's weakness and the insurgency's strength.**

Growth mistakes. Insurgencies that experience initial success in building their movements and expanding their control are susceptible to mistakes rooted in hubris and failure to deepen popular support. Often, as an insurgency grows and insurgents begin to establish a level of localized control or influence, **they attempt to impose their ideology and coerce support from the citizenry, in the process overplaying their hand through zealotry and terror.** In a number of situations they attempt to sustain terror campaigns within the community they are attempting to proselytize. . . .

Movements often attempt to alter the attitude of the international community or an external power by exporting terror during the growth or strategic plateau phase. The GIA [Algeria's Armed Islamic Group] and the Chechens executed their attacks on France and Russia, respectively, during these stages. . . . [Further,] **the mistake of overreliance on state-provided external support is often initially manifested in the growth stage,** although it may appear in latter stages. . . .

Strategic plateau mistakes. If an insurgency **retains and expands local control during the strategic plateau phase, it is prone to errors that can create a backlash** An insurgency may be tempted during this period to try to maximize government decline or reverse their own waning fortunes. . . . **Among the acts of hubris may be the decision to launch a high stakes offensive or to hold territory,** especially if an insurgency has declared the establishment of a government or state. . . . An insurgency may seek to alter its fortunes during a strategic plateau by **boosting its resources through criminal activities. . . .**

Late or resolution mistakes. **In this stage, as in prior stages, insurgent success invites overreach and miscalculation.** As such, most of the errors outlined in the previous stages are manifested during the resolution stage. **When insurgents perceive themselves as nearing victory, they become vulnerable to crippling security lapses,** as was the case with the Shining Path. Insurgencies that lose popular support or whose fortunes are waning often turn to terror in an attempt to regenerate support and tolerance. Often in such cases . . . the use of terror had the opposite effect, accelerating insurgent decline.

Insurgent mistakes in Iraq

The Sunni Arab insurgency in Iraq, especially the part played by Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), illustrates the incidence and timing of strategic mistakes by insurgents and their criticality in reversing the group's fortunes. . . .

Holding territory. **In November 2004, Sunni Arab insurgents, including foreign-led jihadists, opted to defend Al Fallujah against an assault by coalition forces. The decision came during a period of rapid growth and influence for the insurgents.** It is estimated that contesting Al Fallujah **cost the insurgents some 2,000 dead, wounded, or captured.** The insurgents lost control of a highly symbolic citadel and important internal sanctuary, a loss that damaged insurgent morale.

Although the defeat was not a strategic reversal for the Sunni Arab insurgency, it generated criticism from within regarding the decision-making of various leaders and the tactics employed. It was also responsible for creating a degree of disunity among the insurgents.

Retired Major General Robert Scales has asserted that **AQI repeated its mistake in 2007 by declaring Baquba the capital of the Islamic State of Iraq and then attempting to defend it against coalition forces.** In retrospect, the AQI decision to hold Baquba came as insurgent fortunes were clearly in decline. **AQI's loss of control of the city left the group "fractured, relatively leaderless, stripped of concealment and popular force."**

Exporting terror. **In November 2005, near the height of its power and influence, AQI opted to conduct a terrorist attack in Jordan. The attack was designed to target Western interests. Most of the 100 victims, however, were local Muslims. Rather than**

neutralizing a point from which “war on Islam” was conducted, as Mark Cancian termed it, **the attacks turned the Jordanians decisively against AQI and Al-Qaeda, in general.**

Zealotry and dysfunctional terror. AQI’s zealotry and terror developed **concurrently** and appear as of this writing to have dealt a crippling blow to the movement. **Both mistakes emerged during the movement’s growth phase.** The first evidence of zealotry by jihadist fighters and the resulting conflict with nationalist insurgents was seen in 2004 in Al Fallujah, where the insurgents had gained control of the city.

In those locations where the insurgents gained influence over the citizenry, they imposed a strict form of sharia that conflicted with the Islamic customs of Iraqi Sunni Arabs. **Local Iraqis, many of them aligned with the wider Sunni insurgency, were alienated by AQI’s ideology and practices,** which they termed non-Islamic, inhumane, and resembling Taliban behavior in Afghanistan. AQI not only used terror to enforce its version of Islam but also to coerce popular tolerance and diminish support for the government. Frequently, the target of AQI’s terror was Sunni Arabs.

AQI’s zealotry and its misapplication of terror were acutely demonstrated by the decision to declare the formation of an Islamic State of Iraq. . . . **Faced with mounting resistance from within its support base, AQI attempted to reestablish popular support by conducting a terror campaign, a common late-stage mistake for a fading insurgency.** As with other terror campaigns, AQI’s actions only deepened popular resistance to the group. **The backlash against AQI was manifested in the Anbar Awakening,** a tribally-driven movement (backed by nationalist insurgents) that essentially forced AQI out of Al Anbar [province]. . . .

The foregoing is Article No. 1 (IL046A01) in the [Insurgency Literature Review \(ILR\)](#), No. 46, 11 January 2010, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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2. “**Narcoterrorism: How Has Narcoterrorism Settled in Mexico?**” By Fernando Celaya Pacheco, [Studies in Conflict and Terrorism](#), Vol. 32, No. 12, December 2009. [KBTSMexico, KBTTNarco, KBTHBorder] Fernando Celaya Pacheco is affiliated with the Department of War Studies, King’s College, London, United Kingdom. We *quote* from the abstract and conclusion at <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/ftinterface~db=all~content=a917319933~fulltext=713240928?waited=1>:

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s [the leadership of the Mexican drug cartels (MDC)] was nationalistic and entrepreneurial, focusing their efforts specifically on the profitable U.S. drug consumption market. Their goal was to subvert the Mexican state, not challenge it. **Today the various Mexican cartels appear to be headless, bereft of any leadership, or led by thugs who have no allegiances and have begun focusing their enterprises on the increasing national drug consumption demand.**

This has caused anarchy within the different cartels’ ranks and among potential smaller competitors vying for territorial control resulting in an unprecedented

escalation of drug-related violence that qualifies as narcoterrorism. The Mexican state is challenged directly for control over the legitimate use of force and seems unable to rein in the uncontrolled level of violence. . . .

[MDC, gangs, professional criminal groups have adopted systematic strategy of terrorism]

The United States is an indispensable partner supporting Mexico in mitigating its drug-trafficking troubles. **Although the United States should clearly work harder in reducing its immense drug consumption market and continue showing substantive positive results in curbing the transnational arms-for-drugs business south of the border into Mexico, it has limited responsibility for the transformation of narcoviolence into narcoterrorism in Mexico.**

What occurs in Mexico may be **qualified as drug-related criminal insurgencies arising [from several] factors: (1) an increase in Mexico as a drug consumer market; (2) an expansion in transborder arms trade; (3) a fall in U.S. cocaine consumption; and (4) an increase in U.S.-Mexico border enforcement.** The evolution of MDC indicates Mexico has become a critical target subject to territorial disputes and battles over spheres of influence and control over drug-trafficking routes that poses a serious challenge to the Mexican state.

The evidence shows that **MDC, gangs, and professional criminal groups have adopted terrorist techniques and methods as a systematic strategy to instill fear, not only in their adversaries, but also in Mexican society and beyond.** In adopting this strategy they have simultaneously embraced narcoterrorism. **The Mexican government's battle against MDC and other criminal organizations is inhibited by the large sums of money drug lords pay** to politicians who protect them, private judges who will not convict them, and unregulated financial institutions that make big profits laundering money.

[Mexican citizens and civil society will play a vital role promoting citizen security]

Against these odds, **Mexico has adopted similar special preventive measures adopted in Spain and Italy in their fight against terrorism and organized crime that were clearly successful.** At the same time continued efforts to harmonize federal, state, and local criminal laws and procedures should be implemented and properly supervised. **Modernization of the Mexican criminal justice system to speed up judicial process should also be a prime objective.**

Furthermore, **the Merida Initiative cannot be reduced to "Plan Mexico" as some observers have branded it, for it explicitly calls for support of Central American partners who are facing the growing transnational challenge presented by MDC, drug-related criminal organizations, and violent criminal youth gangs** as evidenced by their efforts toward regional security embodied in **the Central American Integration System** (Sistema de la Integración Centro-Americana, SICA). Thus, the Merida Initiative should also be regarded as an opportunity to address growing social problems as well as criminalize the aforementioned groups' activities within SICA.

While the Inter-American Human Rights Commission may play a larger role in ensuring accountability within SICA, **the creation of a transnational U.S.-Mexico commission to supervise potential human rights abuses following militarization could be a**

solution to acquiesce critics, for violations of human rights are neither in the interest of the United States or Mexico. With renewed support by SICA and U.S. financial and technical assistance, **Mexican authorities should overcome law enforcement and security deficiencies of the past and heed President Felipe Calderon’s reforms with a renovated, sustained, and determined effort,** for MDC organized in such networked form could present a serious threat to the nation-state and Mexican democracy.

The progression of the U.S. economy might determine the extent to which this may be accomplished. **By properly defining security policies and objectives Mexican citizens and civil society will play a vital role promoting citizen security,** which may be critical for protecting both Mexican communities’ social fabric as well as law enforcement from criminal corruption and fear of retribution in the long run.

However, **if society as a whole fails to heed this sustained effort the danger to Mexican democracy might be irreversible,** for Jose Manuel Valenzuela Arce concludes that, **clearly “no democratic project can be successful in societies where a culture of fear reigns.”** Should the escalating level of violence and narcoterrorism continue unabated, Mexico will be forever transformed from the birthplace of magical realism to the homeland of wicked realism; a place where the real becomes surreal and the surreal, real.

The foregoing is Article No. 2 (IL046A02) in the [Insurgency Literature Review](#) (ILR), No. 46, 11 January 2010, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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3. “Balochistan: Unrelenting Insurgency,” by Kanchan Lakshman, [South Asia Intelligence Review](#), Vol. 8, No. 20, 23 November 2009. [KBTSPakWT] Kanchan Lakshman is a research fellow at the Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, India. We *quote* from this item at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair8/8_20.htm:

The strategic and resource-rich Balochistan province continues to remain on the periphery of Pakistan’s projects and perceptions. **With both the “dialogue with those who are up in the mountains” and the counterinsurgency (COIN) operations failing, the Baloch insurrection persists. Worse, subversion from the Taliban-Al-Qaeda in the north of the province has added to the region’s complexities.**

[Six active insurgent groups retain capabilities to carry out acts of sabotage on daily basis]

There has, however, been **some reduction in violence during 2009.** At least 268 persons, including 148 civilians and 83 security force personnel, have died in the current year (through 20 November) Significantly, **there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of insurgents killed, an indication that COIN operations are not yielding results.** . . .

Despite the reduced levels of violence, **the insurgency continues to simmer, with a steady stream of bomb and rocket attacks on gas pipelines, railway tracks, power transmission lines, bridges, and communications infrastructure, as well as on military establishments and government facilities.** While there have been at least 126

bomb blasts and grenade explosions across the province in 2009 (data through 20 November), there have also been rocket attacks . . .targeting state installations reported almost on a daily basis in the province. **Baloch insurgents have also targeted government officials and politicians. . . .**

Currently, **there are at least six active insurgent groups in Balochistan: the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Baloch Republican Army, the Baloch People’s Liberation Front, the Popular Front for Armed Resistance, the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and the Baloch Liberation United Front (BLUF).** BLUF . . . appears more aggressive and violent even than BLA and BLF. . . .

The insurgents retain capabilities to carry out acts of sabotage on a daily basis across the province. Acts of violence are, importantly, not restricted to a few areas but are occurring in practically all of the 26 districts, including the provincial capital Quetta. **Quetta continues to witness substantial militant activity, both from the Islamist extremists and the Baloch nationalists. There were 73 militancy-related incidents in Quetta during 2009** (through 15 November) as against 81 in 2008; 72 in 2007; 75 in 2006; 61 in 2005; 51 in 2004; and 32 in 2003.

[Taliban-Al-Qaeda still trying to disrupt supply line for NATO forces in Afghanistan]

While the low-intensity nationalist insurgency continues, **there is a far more insidious movement of subversion being orchestrated by the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine in the northern part of the province.** The Baloch insurgency, in fact, plays out in the sidelines of a greater theater of violence, as Islamist militants in the north orchestrate attacks on both sides of the Afghan border in their areas of domination.

According to General Stanley McChrystal, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, **Taliban militants in Balochistan, known as the “Quetta Shura,” operate openly from the provincial capital, conducting attacks inside both Balochistan and Afghanistan. . . .** Even as the American apprehension about the top leadership of Taliban hiding in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan was being articulated, there has also been **some talk about the Barack Obama administration planning to broaden the scope of its drone attacks to include Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. . . .**

Meanwhile, **the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine continues to try and disrupt the supply line for NATO forces in Afghanistan passing through Balochistan.** In 2009, there have been at least 12 attacks in Balochistan on oil tankers and trucks ferrying NATO supplies to Afghanistan. . . . Among these was also **the first ever suicide attack in a Baloch-populated area.** On 30 June four persons were killed and 11 injured when a bomber targeted a hotel in Kalat in an apparent bid at disrupting supplies to the NATO forces in Afghanistan. . . . **Most of the victims were reportedly Baloch tribesmen. . . .**

[Balochistan has the weakest long-term growth performance of all provinces in Pakistan]

The Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) government, after coming to power at Islamabad in 2008, **made some politically correct statements of intent on providing a “healing touch” to Balochistan.** However, **all of this has remained mere rhetoric** and the political process has failed to take off. Making it more difficult for Islamabad to launch an acceptable political process is **the inability to find any allies among the nationalist elements in the province.**

Worse, **the PPP regime has now been associated with the custodial killing of at least four prominent Baloch leaders.** The mutilated bodies of **Ghulam Mohammed Baloch**, president of the Baloch National Movement, his deputy **Lala Munir Baloch** and **Sher Mohammed Baloch**, deputy secretary general of the Balochistan Republican Party, were found on a mountain river bed in Pidrak near Turbat on 8 April 2009. Later the body of Baloch National Front joint secretary **Rasul Bakhsh Mengal**, who was abducted on 23 August 2009 from Uthal in Lasbela District, with marks of torture, was found hanging from a tree.

The federal government is currently attempting to develop a “consensual” Balochistan package, which would purportedly address the province’s political, social, and economic problems. The package, named Aghaze Huqooq-i-Balochistan, reportedly contains three parts, including constitutional, administrative, and economic measures.

At this point in time, **it remains unclear what measures are being suggested to achieve a consensus and, more importantly, get all the stakeholders on board.** The past trajectory in Balochistan, however, indicates that packages, essentially financial in nature, have achieved little. . . .

Predictably, the latest package seems to have run into rough weather even before its contours have been defined. **The Balochistan National Party (BNP), one of the leading political parties in the province, has termed the package a bribe,** given to halt their movement, and has consequently **demanding the withdrawal of the ongoing military action in the province and the release of missing persons as a confidence-building measure.** . . .

Hectic efforts have been underway for some time now to bring the Baloch rebels to the negotiating table. None of these, however, have had the desired impact in Balochistan as far as Islamabad is concerned. **With the “peace process” ignoring the fundamental issues that have sustained the insurgency, and Islamabad focusing only on the suppression of the insurgency, violence continues to be an everyday reality in the province. The basic issues, which include control over resources, equal authority, and autonomy, are yet to be addressed.**

There are also the issues of endemic neglect and backwardness. Balochistan has the weakest long-term growth performance of all provinces in the country, according to a World Bank study. . . . The [study] only confirms the long-standing disparities between Balochistan and the other provinces, especially Punjab, and **underlines the deep disconnect between Balochistan and the rest of the country, and also the resentment of the Baloch.**

Clearly, **a lasting solution to the long-standing Baloch rebellion looks highly unlikely in the proximate future.** Indeed, **there could be a rising danger from the augmenting presence of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda combine in Balochistan.**

The foregoing is Article No. 3 (IL046A03) in the [Insurgency Literature Review \(ILR\)](#), No. 46, 11 January 2010, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isincreports@mindspring.com).

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4. **“The Familiar Road to Failure in Afghanistan,”** by **Rodric Braithwaite**, **Financial Times**, **22 December 2009**. [KBTSAfghanSoviets, KBTIAfghanCase, KBTSAfghanGW] Sir Rodric Braithwaite was British ambassador to Moscow, 1988-1992. His book **Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-1989** is scheduled for publication in early 2011. From this article at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8fdc4f86-ee99-11de-944c-00144feab49a.html> we *quote*:

On Christmas day 1979, 30 years ago, Soviet forces poured into Afghanistan. Two days later Soviet special forces killed President Hafizullah Amin in his Kabul palace. The Russians imposed their puppet, Babrak Karmal, in his place. Led by Jimmy Carter, the U.S. president, and Margaret Thatcher, the United Kingdom’s prime minister, **the world united against this latest example of cynical and ruthless Soviet imperial aggression against a small neighbor**. Financial, economic, and military assistance to the growing insurgency flooded in from Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United States, and Britain.

Nine years later, on 15 February 1989, the Soviets withdrew, a superpower humiliated by a rag-tag army of pious peasant fighters armed by U.S. congressman Charlie Wilson with the Stinger missiles that drove the Soviet battle helicopters out of the sky. **Thus the myth. The reality was more complicated.**

[Soviet Union initially refused to send troops into Afghanistan]

A good place to start is 1919, when an Afghan army invaded India. The British rapidly defeated them, but in the subsequent peace negotiations they abandoned the 80-year-old monopoly of Afghan foreign policy for which they had successfully fought in the nineteenth century.

Freed from British tutelage, the Afghans promptly recognized the infant Soviet Union. The Russians had a major, indeed a “legitimate,” interest in close links with a country strategically situated on their southern border, a potential source of instability, drugs, Islamic fundamentalism, and American intrigue. **They were happy to work with whomever was currently in power in Kabul. They trained Afghan officers and engineers and built many large projects** including a national highway, a strategic road tunnel through the mountains, one of the largest agricultural projects in Asia, and the Polytechnic Institute in Kabul.

By the 1970s they had also developed a close but unhappy relationship with the Afghan Communist party, which was fatally split between moderates led by Karmal and extremists led by Nur Mohammed Taraki and Amin. **In a bloody coup**, to which the Russians were probably not a party, **the Communists overthrew President Mohammed Daud in April 1978**. The extremists then won the factional fight. **They believed that the methods pioneered by Stalin could transform Afghanistan into a secular “socialist” country in a matter of years, and began to imprison and execute their opponents in large numbers.**

Opposition rapidly spread throughout the country. In March 1978 insurgents, joined by the local garrison, took over the provincial capital of Herat. Stories unbacked by evidence say that up to 100 Soviet advisers and their families were

slaughtered. **The Kabul government panicked and appealed to Moscow to send troops.**

Moscow refused and Aleksei Kosygin, Soviet prime minister, told Taraki: “We believe it would be a fatal mistake to commit ground troops. **If our troops went in, the situation in your country would not improve. On the contrary, it would get worse.** Our troops would have to struggle not only with an external aggressor, but with a significant part of your own people.” His words were prophetic.

[Russia’s objectives were modest—initially sent about 80,000 troops]

The insurgency went on growing. **The Russians continued to turn down repeated Afghan requests for troops. But the Soviet general staff did do some contingency planning, and sent detachments of special forces and paratroopers** into Kabul and the airbase at Bagram as a precaution.

In the autumn things deteriorated much further. Amin murdered Taraki, took over the country, stepped up the arrests and executions, and began to talk to the Americans. So far, the Russians’ attempts to influence the course of Afghan politics had been completely ineffective. Now they feared that the place would slip away from them entirely. **They decided something must be done.** The KGB made some ineffectual attempts to assassinate Amin. **But the military option began to seem unavoidable.**

The Russians’ objectives were modest. They wanted to stabilize the Afghan government, secure the roads and the main towns, train up the Afghan army and police, and then leave. At that point an argument opened up in Moscow. The politicians agreed with the KGB that a force of 30,000 to 40,000 should be sufficient. The military wanted something much more substantial: they had after all sent some half a million soldiers to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968. **The force that finally went into Afghanistan consisted initially of about 80,000 troops.** Ironically, Amin believed until the very end that the Russians were coming in response to his repeated requests, and he sent a senior staff officer to the Soviet frontier to smooth their passage.

The Fortieth Army, as it was called, was inadequate. It was put together in a hurry and, **though it grew to about 100,000 men, it was always too small:** the military later came to believe that they would have needed 32 divisions to subdue Afghanistan and close its border with Pakistan. **It was designed to fight on the North German plain, and so was neither equipped nor trained to face an insurgency.**

The Russian soldiers did eventually learn to fight effectively in the mountains and in what they (and the British soldiers who followed them) called the “green zone,” the lethal tangle of booby-trapped irrigation ditches, vineyards, and narrow village streets of the cultivated valleys. **But it took time. They lost a lot of people in the process. And they killed a great many Afghans in a war as brutal as the American war in Vietnam.**

[In 1985 Gorbachev told Afghans that troops would begin to leave in a year or 18 months]

Two-thirds of the soldiers were engaged in defense: garrisoning the towns, searching villages, manning guard posts along the roads. **The aggressive fighting was done by special forces, paratroopers and reconnaissance troops, supported and transported by armored vehicles and helicopters.**

Despite their losses, the Russians won most of their fights. They kept the main roads open, something we cannot always do today. They broke mujahideen attempts to besiege cities. **They mounted large operations**, mustering up to 12,000 troops, to suppress mujahideen bases and formations. **They put together an Afghan army**, armed with heavy weapons, which often fought well enough, despite the distressing tendency of Afghan officers to change sides and of soldiers to return to their villages when the going got rough. **But the Russians never got over their basic weakness: they could take the territory, but they never had enough troops to hold it. As one Russian critic put it, they had tactics but no strategy.**

From the beginning there were critical voices both inside and outside government. **The criticism grew as the bodies began to come home in their zinc coffins. People complained bitterly that the war was pointless and shameful**, and that their sons were dying in vain. In 1983 the government began to look for an exit strategy. **Soon after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985—well before the first Stinger was fired—he told the Afghans that the Soviet troops would pull out in a year or 18 months.**

That was easier said than done. The Russians needed to save face, to leave a friendly regime behind them, to say that their young men had not died in vain. The mujahideen wanted victory, the Pakistanis wanted to install their allies in Kabul, and the Americans wanted to go on making the Russians bleed in revenge for Vietnam.

But after two years of bitter negotiation, **the Russians achieved much of what they needed. Their new man, Mohammed Najibullah, remained in control in Kabul and after nine unsatisfactory years the Fortieth Army withdrew in good order. Some 15,000 Soviet soldiers had died, and perhaps as many as 1.5 million Afghans.**

[Coalition already has as many troops as Russians did—and better military technology]

Najibullah lasted two more years. Then President Boris Yeltsin's new government in Moscow cut off supplies of food, fuel, and weapons, and, like the British puppets of the nineteenth century, **[Najibullah] was overthrown and eventually killed. After a vicious civil war, it was left to the Taliban to restore order.**

The lessons of history are never clear, and it is risky to predict the future. The British and the Russians won their wars but failed to impose their chosen leaders and systems of government on the Afghans. **The Western coalition already has as many troops in Afghanistan as the Russians did, and smarter military technology.**

But neither the British prime minister nor the generals have explained to us convincingly why we should succeed where the Russians and the British failed, or why fighting in Afghanistan will prevent home-grown fanatics from planting bombs in British cities. Tactics without strategy indeed.

The foregoing is Article No. 4 (IL046A04) in the [Insurgency Literature Review \(ILR\)](#), No. 46, 11 January 2010, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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5. “**The Soviet Victory That Never Was: What the United States Can Learn from the Soviet War in Afghanistan,**” by **Nikolas K. Gvosdev**, ***Foreign Affairs***, **10 December 2009**

(<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/node/65674#>). [KBTSAfghanSoviets, KBTIAfghanCase, KBTSAfghanGW, KBTSPakWT] Nikolas K. Gvosdev is Professor of National Security Studies at the Naval War College. We *quote*:

Could the Soviet Union have won its war in Afghanistan? Today, the victory of the anti-Soviet mujahideen seems preordained as part of the West’s ultimate triumph in the Cold War. **To suggest that an alternative outcome was possible—and that the United States has something to learn from the Soviet Union’s experience in Afghanistan—may be controversial.** But to avoid being similarly frustrated by the infamous “graveyard of empires,” **U.S. military planners would be wise to study how the Soviet Union nearly emerged triumphant from its decade-long war.**

There are, of course, **some fundamental differences** between the Soviets’ war in the 1980s and the U.S.-led mission today.

First, the Soviet Union intervened to save a Communist regime which was in danger of collapsing due to resistance to its comprehensive and often traumatic social engineering programs.

Unlike the Soviets and their client regime, **the United States is not interested in forcibly removing the burkas from Afghan women, shooting large numbers of mullahs for resisting secularization, or reprogramming the political and social mores of Afghans.** Instead, Washington has a far more limited objective: namely, ensuring that Afghanistan remains an inhospitable base for extremist groups hoping to attack the West.

Second, the Soviet army was prepared to fight a total war in Afghanistan, taking heavy losses in men and machinery and inflicting sweeping violence on the Afghan people. No U.S. commander would be willing to wage such a war today; **the U.S. military realizes that making a desert and calling it peace is no way to curtail an insurgency.**

[**Najibullah constructed nationwide patronage network to dispense Soviet largesse**]

But the Soviet experience should not be entirely ignored. When Soviet troops pulled out of Afghanistan in February 1989, many in the United States expected to see the mujahideen quickly topple the pro-Moscow government in Kabul. This did not happen.

The regime led by Mohammed Najibullah, whom Moscow installed as president in 1987, remained in control of the country. For a moment, it appeared as if the Kremlin had successfully left in power an Afghan government and army that could withstand the Soviet withdrawal.

The Najibullah government was able to survive because Najibullah recognized the futility of the earlier Soviet strategy in Afghanistan. Afghans, he knew, would not fight and die for the Soviet Union. But, **he realized, Afghans could be co-opted to work with the government to defend local and clan interests.** Najibullah allowed regional

leaders—and, in some cases, former mujahideen commanders—to form their own militias and, with mixed results, to join the regular army. The most successful of these was **the Uzbek militia led by General Abdul Rashid Dostum**, which formed the 53rd Infantry Division of the Afghan army.

The departure of Soviet troops—“the foreigners”—weakened ties among various mujahideen factions. **Najibullah’s government used long-standing rivalries, along with selective and generous bribery, to drive wedges between militant groups** and then take advantage of the fighting that broke out as a result. At the same time, **Najibullah received weaponry, food, and fuel from the Soviets, which gave his forces a significant advantage** in terms of battlefield firepower and resources. The Afghan military flew the latest Soviet aircraft and had hundreds of Soviet-made Scud missiles in its arsenal.

The government in Kabul also dropped many of the more radical social engineering programs previously championed by the Afghan Communist leadership. It moved away from Marxist ideology and embraced Islam as the state religion, making an effort to put many of the country’s mullahs on the government payroll.

Finally, **Najibullah constructed a nationwide patronage network to dispense the government largesse provided by the Soviet Union.** In particular, **he kept open the Salang Road—a critical supply route linking Kabul with the country’s south—by striking a series of deals with local villages and elders, who agreed to prevent mujahideen from mounting attacks on supply lines in exchange for a percentage of the goods flowing from the Soviet Union.**

[Najibullah was successful in partially accommodating some resistance elements by 1989]

In short, **Najibullah relied on time-honored practices of Afghan statecraft.** He resembled a Communist version of Mohammad Nadir Shah, who had ruled the country after the overthrow of King Amanullah Khan in 1929. Both the shah and Najibullah **pushed for quiet modernization rather than reform from above, placated local interests while using divide-and-rule techniques to break up the opposition, and focused on strengthening the state’s army and security services.**

The Najibullah regime demonstrated its resilience during the ill-advised mujahideen assault on the southern city of Jalalabad in March 1989. Although Pakistani and U.S. military advisers were convinced that much of the Afghan army would defect and the Najibullah government would quickly fold, the mujahideen overestimated their own strength and were forced to retreat. **Inflated hopes of success meant the loss rocked the alliance of anti-Najibullah forces; meanwhile, morale inside the government skyrocketed, and Najibullah’s efforts to convince local leaders to back his rule began to bear greater fruit.**

By the summer of 1989, U.S. officials began to admit that Najibullah had been successful in finding partial accommodation with some elements of the resistance. Typical intelligence assessments no longer measured Najibullah’s survival in weeks or months. An August 1989 analysis on the “MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour” concluded, “The prospect of an outright guerrilla victory in Afghanistan is now receding. Sooner or later, that may prompt a reassessment by the mujahideen and their Western backers.”

[Collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 ended Najibullah's ability to buy loyalties across country]

The Soviets and their proxy regime in Kabul were hoping for a post-withdrawal settlement under which Pakistan and the United States would stop arming and financing the mujahideen. That did not happen. Some \$500 million a year continued to flow to the mujahideen. (In 1991, the United States terminated its aid, while Pakistani and Saudi funding continued.)

Most important, **as Najibullah would soon learn, no government in Kabul is safe without Islamabad's express agreement.** As head of the Afghan secret police in the early 1980s, Najibullah sponsored attempts to subvert the Pakistani government and tried to foment a rebellion in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan.

Although **Pakistani officials** had signaled that they might allow some members of the Communist regime in an Afghan coalition government, they **were completely opposed to Najibullah, a potentially threatening a figure, remaining in power. Afghanistan was to be run by Pakistan's proteges, not clients of the Soviets.**

As mujahideen attacks continued to work away at Najibullah's flanks, **Pakistan's intelligence services probed for weaknesses at the government's core.** They found a vulnerability at the heart of Najibullah's rule: **In March 1990, Defense Minister Shahnawaz Tanai tried to overthrow Najibullah in cooperation with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whom Pakistan preferred as the country's leader. The coup failed—but it spooked Najibullah, who began to distrust anyone outside of his immediate circle.** Non-Pashtun figures such as Dostum began to fear that they were vulnerable and could be eliminated.

Then, **in December 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, taking down with it the gravy train that had enabled Najibullah to buy loyalties across the country. A series of defections followed, most notably that of Dostum, who, in the spring of 1992, joined forces with Ahmed Shah Masoud in an effort to block a Hekmatyar victory. These shifts in allegiance—not superior tactics or greater popular appeal of the mujahideen—ultimately brought down Najibullah's government.**

[Karzai: Afghanistan will need five years to take over security, 15 years of assistance]

The initial stability of Najibullah's government suggests that Afghans will assume responsibility for the fate of their government when the foreign footprint in their country has been sharply reduced—but only if an outside patron is prepared to supply and equip Afghan forces. The central government in Kabul is strengthened when it sends gifts to the provinces rather than collecting taxes from them. But someone has to pay for this. The United Kingdom lavished resources on India in the nineteenth century; the Soviet Union sent billions of rubles to Afghanistan. **Is Washington prepared to play such a role today?**

Najibullah's fall from power is a reminder that the fate of the Kabul government is closely tied to what happens in Pakistan. (Najibullah remained in Afghanistan and was killed by the Taliban in 1996.) As much as he was able to compromise and negotiate with his adversaries, he ran up against an even stronger opponent in Pakistan, which offered sanctuary to his enemies and a great deal of funding, weaponry, and logistical support to

groups that opposed his rule. **The road to Kabul lies through Islamabad—and these days even more through Peshawar, where the Pashtun insurgency has its base.**

The United States, then, must ask itself some hard questions. **Is Afghan President Hamid Karzai another Babrak Karmal**, who was the Soviet Union's initial preference as Afghanistan's leader but who was unable to build a self-supporting regime that permitted his foreign benefactors to go home? **Recent statements from Karzai suggesting that Afghanistan will need another five years to take over security and another 15 years of U.S. assistance will not inspire much confidence among U.S. policymakers.**

It remains unclear whether the current Afghan government can find a Pashtun leader who enjoys enough credibility among the country's non-Pashtuns in order to set up a durable central government. Karzai's delay in naming a new cabinet is worrying. **Although the Obama administration is hoping for the best, it needs to ask if it has its own Najibullah waiting in the wings.** If so, now would be a good time for him to step forward.

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