AFGANTSY: THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

Complete Rules
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Introduction

Though he did not know it in 1979, Afghanistan's communist leader Hafizullah Amin had courted the ire of the Soviet Union. Having been swept into power during the country’s communist revolution a year earlier, Amin was under the impression that the U.S.S.R. was a natural ally to his new government. Initially, this turned out to be the case. But Brezhnev and Politburo would soon sour on Afghanistan’s new leader. They saw him as doing too little to stop Islamic fundamentalism from spreading beyond Afghanistan’s borders, particularly into the Soviet Union, where its repercussions were already being felt. There was an unfounded suspicion that the U.S.-educated Amin was a CIA plant. Amin had tried to keep the U.S.S.R. friendly, but at arm’s length, repeatedly rebuffing Soviet offers to help his government combat resurgent rebel militants. A surprise invasion by the Soviets on December 27 would result in his death, and the start of the Soviet-Afghan War.

The Soviet Union’s decade-long incursion into Afghanistan has been compared to the American experience in Vietnam. Both wars bore some surface similarities to each other, though closer examination reveals a multitude of differences behind the circumstances that brought them about, the relative commitment both great powers had to these conflicts, and the motivations for their involvement in the first place. The generation of Soviet veterans who emerged from this conflict were called the “Afgantsy,” and would later serve in Chechnya and Georgia. Thousands of them are fighting currently, on both sides, in the war in Ukraine. It is my hope that this wargame brings some small recognition to this war, which is a conflict that regretfully exists outside of the American body of knowledge.

If you have any questions regarding rules, the VASSAL module, or suggestions for the game, please do not hesitate to email me at wfk10@georgetown.edu. Thanks for playing!

-Walter
Setup (skip this if you’re running the VASSAL module)

1) Place the pieces outlined below in the following provinces:
   - Mazar i Sharif: 2 Soviet infantry units.
   - Kabul: 1 Soviet air unit, 3 Soviet infantry units, 2 Mujahideen infantry units
   - The province immediately north of Kabul: 6 Mujahideen infantry units.
   - Jalalabad: 1 Soviet infantry unit; 1 Mujahideen infantry unit
   - Herat: 2 Soviet infantry units; 2 Mujahideen infantry units
   - The province immediately south of Herat: 1 Soviet infantry unit
   - Kandahar: 1 Soviet air unit; 2 Soviet infantry units; 1 Mujahideen infantry unit
   - The Mujahideen resupply province 2 spaces south of Mazar i Sharif: 3 Mujahideen infantry units
   - The northeasternmost province: 3 Mujahideen infantry units.
   - The southernmost Pakistani province: 2 Mujahideen infantry units
   - The northernmost Pakistani province: 2 Mujahideen infantry units

2) Place Soviet control markers in the following provinces:
   - Mazar i Sharif
   - Kabul
   - Herat
   - Jalalabad
   - Kandahar
   - The province directly south of Herat

3) Place Mujahideen control markers in all other Afghan provinces that do not contain Soviet control markers.

4) Place the turn tracker in the first position. Place the Mujahideen Sympathy tracker at 4.

5) Allocate 4 funds to the Soviet treasury, and 2 funds to the Mujahideen treasury.

6) Place the following units in reserves for each faction:
   - 3 Soviet air units
   - 6 Soviet infantry units
   - 6 Mujahideen infantry units

7) Each player draws a hand of seven cards. The Soviet player may draw these seven cards from either of their decks in any order they so choose before the game begins.
The map above is a layout of Afghanistan; please note the following distinctions:
- The squares shown on the map are resupply values. Each resupply value indicates the maximum amount of new units of a certain type that can be brought in from reserves in that province in a single Resupply Phase.
- The five city provinces: Kabul, Mazar i Sharif, Jalalabad, Herat, and Kandahar are all marked on the map.
- The green provinces are Pakistani provinces, which only the Mujahideen player can move through.
- The red provinces are Soviet provinces, which only the Soviet player can move through.
- The striped provinces are mountainous provinces, which confer special defensive bonuses.
Basics of Play

The cards and dice used in this game use a set of simple symbols to represent certain game components or actions. These symbols and their meanings are broken down below.

Card Symbols:

- One unit
- One army
- Move one space
- Collect one fund
- Fight one battle
- Draw one card

Each player has a hand of Action Cards that will have some combination of these symbols on them. The Soviet player uses red action cards, and the Mujahideen player uses green action cards. Here are some examples of a few Action Cards found within the game, and what they mean.

A Soviet Mobilize card. It can be played for its Primary ability to move two armies two spaces each, or for its Secondary ability to gain three funds.

A Mujahideen Offensive card. It can be played for its Primary ability to move one army one space and immediately fight a battle in that space, or for its Secondary ability to gain one fund.

A Soviet Engage card. It can be played for its Primary ability to fight two battles in two different spaces, or for its Secondary ability to gain two funds.

As seen above, each card has both a Primary and a Secondary ability. When playing a card, a player must declare whether they are playing it for its Primary or its Secondary—they cannot ever play a card for both. **A player does not have to resolve the entirety of their Primary or**
Secondary ability—they may choose to resolve only one part of it if they so wish. After resolving either the Primary or Secondary ability of a card, a player places that card in their discard pile.

The secondary of each card is printed on the back of that card, and is intended to be legible to the opponent. Your opponent has the right to examine the backs of your cards, and you have the right to examine the backs of your opponent’s cards.

**Dice Symbols:**

The dice used to adjudicate combat have varying symbols on them as well. These symbols and their meanings are laid out below here:

- **FLEE**
  - Return the unit to reserves.

- **HIT**
  - Allocate one hit to an enemy unit of your enemy’s choice.

- **MOVE**
  - You may move the unit one space.

- **SYMPATHY**
  - Increase Mujahideen sympathy by one.

**Control of Provinces**

During the Upkeep Phase, after both players have finished declaring all of their actions, provinces change hands between Soviet and Mujahideen control. Whoever has more *infantry* units in a province at the end of the turn controls that province, and places their faction’s Control Marker in that province. If both players have an equal number of *infantry* units in a province, the Soviet player controls the province. If there are no *infantry* units belonging to any faction in a province, the Mujahideen player controls that province.

During the Upkeep Phase, if one or more provinces flipped from Mujahideen to Soviet control that turn, the Mujahideen player gains 1 sympathy.

**Winning the Game**

The Soviets win the game at the end of any turn in which they control five out of the six
Mujahideen resupply provinces on the map.

The Mujahideen win the game if either of these two conditions are met:
- At the end of any turn in which they control both Kabul and the six Afghanistan provinces bordering the Soviet Union.
- The 1988 turn ends with neither player having won the game.

Phases of the Turn

A single game turn is divided into four phases. These phases are:

RESUPPLY PHASE
DRAW PHASE
ACTION PHASE
UPKEEP PHASE

1) Draw Phase (Skip during the first turn)

Each player draws new Action Cards. The Soviet player draws four cards from any of their two decks as they so desire, discarding any cards if they have over seven cards in their hand. The Mujahideen player draws two cards, plus one card for every specially marked space on the sympathy tracker. They then discard any number of cards over seven in their hand.

If a player has no cards remaining to draw, they must shuffle their discard pile into their deck (or, in the case of the Soviet Player, shuffle and then split their discard pile into two decks) and then continue to draw cards.

1) Resupply Phase (Skip during the first turn)

Beginning with the Mujahideen player, each player declares how much funds they are spending on units and which resupply provinces those units will be arriving in. These provinces are marked with colored squares, as well as numbers indicating the maximum number of units that a faction can bring in each Resupply Phase. Those units are then put into their resupply provinces from their faction’s Reserves space. If there are no more units of a particular type in Reserves—those units cannot resupply!
The above image is a section of the map showing several provinces. The province of Kabul can resupply a maximum of three Soviet infantry (red), one Soviet air (orange), and one Mujahideen infantry (green) in a single turn.

Each unit has different costs to resupply—this is reflective of their combat effectiveness, equipment, and overall training. The costs for each unit are below:

Mujahideen infantry unit: 2 funds
Soviet infantry unit: 3 funds
Soviet air unit: 4 funds

Finally, if an enemy infantry unit is located in one of your resupply provinces, the total number of funds required to resupply friendly units into that province is increased by 1.
In the above example, The Soviet player wants to bring 2 Soviet infantry into Mazar i Sharif during the Resupply Phase, which would normally cost 6 funds. However, because the Mujahideen player has 2 infantry units in that province, it costs 7 funds to bring 2 Soviet infantry into Mazar i Sharif. Since the Soviet player only has 6 funds, he opts to bring in a Soviet air unit into Mazar i Sharif—paying the increased rate of 5 funds due to the presence of enemy forces there.

2) Draw Phase (Skip during the first turn)

Each player draws new Action Cards. The Soviet player draws four cards from any of their two decks as they so desire, discarding any cards if they have over seven cards in their hand. The Mujahideen player draws two cards, plus one card for every specially marked space on the sympathy tracker. They then discard any number of cards over seven in their hand.

If a player has no cards remaining to draw, they must shuffle their discard pile into their deck (or, in the case of the Soviet Player, shuffle and then split their discard pile into two decks) and then continue to draw cards.

3) Action Phase

Beginning with the Mujahideen player, at the start of each turn, players alternate taking actions one after the other. Below is a list of Actions that players can take on their turn:

- **Play a card**: Resolve the Primary or Secondary ability of an Action Card.
**Patrol:** Discard a card; move one unit one space, following normal movement rules.

**Firefight:** Discard a card; fight one battle in one space.

**Gather Information:** Discard two cards; draw one card.

**Pass:** Do nothing.

**Special Operation (Soviet only):** Spend 2 funds; pick one card from the Mujahideen player's hand. The Mujahideen player places that card on the bottom of their deck.

**Agitate (Mujahideen only):** Spend 3 sympathy; place one Mujahideen unit in any Afghanistan province.

Once two Pass actions in a row occur, the Action phase ends.

4) **Upkeep Phase**

Determine control of provinces and flip any relevant control markers. If one or more provinces flipped from Mujahideen to Soviet control, increase Mujahideen sympathy by one. Then, advance the turn counter one space and proceed to the next turn.

**Movement Rules and Special Considerations**

Soviet units or armies cannot move into the green Pakistani provinces under any circumstances. Similarly, the Mujahideen player cannot move into the red Soviet province under any circumstances.

An army is defined as “any grouping of units belonging to one player that start their turn in the same province.” Armies can pick up other friendly units in provinces they move through, but they cannot drop off friendly units in provinces they move through. Any card that allows an army to move can also allow a single unit to move, though the reverse is not true.
In the above example, the Mujahideen player plays the Primary Ability of a Mobilize card, which allows him to move two armies two spaces each. In the north, he moves two of his infantry units into a neighboring southwest province, picks up two more infantry units, and deposits all four of them in Herat to complete his first army move. In the south, for his second army move, he picks up four infantry units out of the five he has in the southern province and moves them one space north. Since he has selected these four units as his army, he cannot leave any of them behind as he moves into the central mountainous province west of Kabul to complete his final move.

After an air unit, or an army containing at least one air unit finishes a move action, any number of air units in that army may opt to perform an Air Strike. Each air unit participating in an Air Strike rolls one attack dice each against enemy units in the province they moved into. This does not count as a battle. Enemy units targeted in this way cannot roll attack dice in retaliation.

**Fighting Battles**

Units from opposing factions can remain in the same province as one another indefinitely. Battles only occur as a result of a battle symbol on an Action Card, or if the Firefight action is taken.

All battles proceed in combat rounds. Players continue a combat across multiple rounds until one side is totally defeated. The player currently in control of the province the battle is taking place in rolls one corresponding attack dice for each of their units first, followed by the opposing player. In mountain (striped) provinces, the player who did not declare the battle rolls their combat dice first, regardless of who controls the province at the start of the battle.

- Battles can only occur in provinces where both Soviet and Mujahideen units are present.
- If an action allows both a unit or army to move and then battle, such as the Primary Action on an OFFENSIVE card, the battle must take place in the same province that the move concludes in.
- If a card or action just allows one, or multiple, battles to occur, with no movement involved, these battles can occur in any province.

**Event, Interrupt, and Remains-in-Play Cards**

There are three special types of Action Cards with unique Primary Abilities: event cards, interrupt cards, and remains-in-play cards.

*Event cards:* These cards have unique Primary abilities that can only be resolved after a certain turn has occurred. They are reflective of real events that occurred over the course of the Soviet-Afghan War. If an Event card is played for its Primary Ability, it is removed from the game—do not put it in the discard pile.
Interrupt cards: These cards have unique Primary Abilities that can be played in response to certain actions or conditions. As a general rule, a player can resolve the Primary Ability of an interrupt at any time in the Action Phase, even in the middle of an opponent’s action or following the conclusion of one of their own actions. Many interrupt cards have specific timing conditions governing their use, as outlined on the card text.

Remains-in-Play cards: These cards remain on the board after their Primary Abilities are resolved. They may confer permanent bonuses or unique Actions. Like Event cards, some of them may require a certain turn to have elapsed before they can be played.