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**14. ABSTRACT**

Current U.S. military planning procedures were developed during the Cold War. As such, they generally fail to incorporate critical contemporary battlefield variables into the planning processes. Notably absent from deliberate planning is an analysis of the impact of culture and society on the way potential adversaries fight. Today's enemies are becoming increasingly asymmetric, and the problems faced by the United States have shifted from the well-structured problems of the Cold War to the increasingly ill-structured problems of the Long War. The military's standard planning methodologies were not developed around ill-structured problems. Consequently, a single analytic template can no longer be applied with equal success to all problems. An analysis of the dominant Arab culture and of Arab society demonstrates the need to better incorporate intangible elements into our planning procedures. To remain relevant and effective, our planning process must keep pace with change. Military planners must find new planning procedures to augment existing doctrine, incorporate a better understanding of culture and society into current doctrine, expand and change the use of Foreign Area Officers and cultural advisors, and provide more opportunities for advanced civil education for our leaders.

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**Beyond the Commander's Estimate of the Situation:**
**The Role of Culture and Society in the Military Decision-Making Process**


**by**


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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the**
**requirement of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily**
**endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**


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**16 May 2006**

**Abstract**

Current U.S. military planning procedures were developed during the Cold War. As such, they generally fail to incorporate critical contemporary battlefield variables into the planning processes. Notably absent from deliberate planning is an analysis of the impact of culture and society on the way potential adversaries fight. Today's enemies are becoming increasingly asymmetric, and the problems faced by the United States have shifted from the well-structured problems of the Cold War to the increasingly ill-structured problems of the Long War. The military's standard planning methodologies were not developed around ill-structured problems. Consequently, a single analytic template can no longer be applied with equal success to all problems. An analysis of the dominant Arab culture and of Arab society demonstrates the need to better incorporate intangible elements into our planning procedures. To remain relevant and effective, our planning process must keep pace with change. Military planners must find new planning procedures to augment existing doctrine, incorporate a better understanding of culture and society into current doctrine, expand and change the use of Foreign Area Officers and cultural advisors, and provide more opportunities for advanced civil education for our leaders.

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Even before the first bombs of OPERATION DESERT STORM fell in Iraq on January 17, 1991, CENTCOM planners and Washington politicians both harbored fears that the casualty predictions might come true. During the weeks leading up to combat operations, CENTCOM estimated that Saddam Hussein's military could inflict as many as 10,000 United States casualties during the liberation of Kuwait. As the dust settled forty-one days later, the American military had suffered but 613 casualties – less than seven percent of the *best* pre-war estimates.[1] Twelve years later, President George W. Bush addressed the people of Iraq following the opening salvos of OPERATION IRAQ FREEDOM (OIF). During his address, he established the goals of the coalition arrayed against Hussein:

> We will end a brutal regime, whose aggression and weapons of mass destruction make it a unique threat to the world. Coalition forces will help maintain law and order, so that Iraqis can live in security…We will help you build a peaceful and representative government that protects the rights of all citizens. And then our military forces will leave.[2]

Most senior military leaders, like President Bush, believed that regime change would bring stability not only to Iraq but throughout the Gulf region. Very few foresaw the emergence of an insurgency that would keep 150,000 military personnel in Iraq for over three years.

OPERATIONS DESERT STORM and IRAQI FREEDOM were both waged in the same geographical region, against the same enemy, against many of the same soldiers, and with familiar allies. Why, in both cases, did military planners arrive at the wrong conclusion about two aspects of the plan that had overwhelming implications for the conduct of the operation? Was it coincidence, or do these "oversights" point to problems within the intelligence system

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[1] Of the 10,000 projected casualties, CENTCOM estimated that as many as 1,500 would be killed in action (KIA). Of the 613 actual casualties (6.3% of the estimated number), 146 were KIA (9.7 % of the estimated number). Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 132-133; 456-457.

[2] George W. Bush, "Message to the Iraqi People by President Bush," [database on-line] (Washington DC: The White House, 10 April 2003, accessed 12 May 2006); available from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/04/20030410-2.html; Internet.

as many people have suggested?  Or can these miscalculations be traced back to a systematic

problem in the way the military plans and prepares for major operations?  In his study of the

impact of Arab culture on Arab military effectiveness, Dr. Kenneth Pollack concluded that

the "absurd overestimation of Iraqi military capabilities prior to the Persian Gulf War [is]

only the most egregious example" of our tendency to "dismiss culture as a potential influence

on military effectiveness."[3]  Paul Belbutowski also noted that "culture, comprised of all that

is vague and intangible, is not generally integrated into strategic planning except at the most

superficial level."[4]  The origins of the errant predictions from both wars in the Persian Gulf

lie in the military's contemporary planning doctrine.  The military planning processes (the

Commander's Estimate of the Situation (CES) at the joint level, the Army's Military

Decision-Making Process (MDMP), the Navy and Marine Corps Planning Processes, and the

"rather eclectic mixture of existing processes"[5] used by the Air Force) are relics of the Cold

War, and they fail to incorporate key variables into the planning process.  Notably absent

from deliberate and crisis action planning is an analysis of the impact of culture and society

on the way an enemy fights.  Service planning doctrine must be revised if they are to remain

relevant in the contemporary operating environment.


**Origins and Limitations of Military Planning Procedures**

The planning methods used by today's services are all loosely based on the Army's

MDMP, and the MDMP's origins demonstrate the shortcomings of the military's planning

doctrine.  The forerunner of the MDMP first appeared in Army doctrine in 1932 with the

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[3] Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Effect of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness," (Ph.D. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), 764.

[4] Paul M. Belbutowski, "Strategic Implications of Cultures in Conflict," *Parameters* (Spring, 1996): 35.

[5] Joseph Anderson and Nathan K. Slate, "The Case for a Joint Military Decisionmaking Process," *Military Review* (September-October, 203): 11.

publication of the *Staff Officer's Field Manual*.[6]  The *Staff Officer's Field Manual* was re-

vised in 1940, and the MDMP was codified in *Army Field Manual (FM) 101-5, Staff Offi-

cer's Field Manual, The Staff and Combat Orders*.  *FM 101-5* underwent revision six addi-

tional times between 1960 and 2004.  The four revisions between 1960 and 1982 were Cold

War improvements to the original concept, while the 1997 revision incorporated emerging

concepts such as Commander's Intent and the Commander's Critical Information

Requirements.  The 2004 revision aligned the MDMP with joint doctrine and was renamed

FM 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*.

 During the Cold War, most "tactical and operational thought was directed toward the

successful conduct of major conventional combat operations *between states (mostly western)*

*with similarly organized and equipped militaries*."[7]  The world consisted of three blocks: the

West, the Soviet Block, and the non-aligned countries courted by the two super powers.  As

the Soviet Union exported military hardware and advisors, they also exported their military

doctrine.  As a result, by studying the Soviet armed forces, intelligence personnel had a

reasonable idea how any potential enemy would fight.  The beauty of the MDMP was that it

had near universal applicability, but it rested on the fundamental assumption that we would

fight predictable (or at least rational) enemies.

 That all changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union.  The United States no longer

faced a monolithic enemy.  While the MDMP was still good enough for many of the threats

facing the United States (states that retained their Soviet-sponsored equipment and doctrine),

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[6] While there were other documented planning procedures in use at the time, this was the first time that
the Army endorsed a specific process.  The *Staff Officer's Filed Manual* was approved by General Douglas
MacArthur.  United States Army, *Field Manual 5-0: Army Planning and Orders Production*, (Washington DC:
Headquarters, Department of the Army; October 2004), p. vii.

 [7] John D. Waghelstein and Donald Chisholm, "Analyzing Insurgency," (Newport, R.I.: The Naval War
College, February 2006), 2.  (Italics added.)

our nation's enemies became increasingly asymmetric. Today's operational environment is far from homogeneous. The joint force faces a growing number of "irregular" adversaries such as rogue states, failed and failing states, and "well-resourced, non-state, transnational actors." Unfortunately, our planning doctrine has not kept pace with our enemies.

**Problem Structure and the Need for Change**

The Army defines the MDMP as "a planning tool that establishes procedures for analyzing a mission, developing, analyzing, and comparing courses of action…, selecting the optimum course of action, and producing a plan or order."[8] Service decision-making processes attempt to synthesize friendly and enemy capabilities, specified tasks, commander's guidance, and innumerable battlefield variables into a concise plan of action to achieve a desired end state. As the battlefield has become more asymmetrically complex, the impacts of these battlefield variables have increased exponentially.

In their simplest form, military operations are problems that fall along a continuum of structure. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has witnessed a fundamental shift in the way military problems are structured. *FM 5-0* defines problems as well-, medium-, or ill-structured (see Figure 1). During the Cold War, most of the problems confronting the United States were well-structured: they were easy to define, information was plentiful, and planners could apply an algebraic formula (a process) to derive a verifiable, routine solution. *FM 5-0* argues that medium-structured problems (those that are only partially defined with limited amounts of available information and non-routine answers) represent "the preponderance of the problems…leaders face" today.[9] A look at the definitions of medium-

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[8] United States Army, *FM 5-0,* p. 3-1.
[9] Ibid., p. 2-5.

and ill-structured problems, however, indicates otherwise.  Present-day problems are becoming increasingly ill-structured as the battle field becomes more complex, information harder to attain, and solutions more fleeting.

| Type of Problem | <<<< Continuum of Conflict >>>> | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Well-Structured** | **Medium-Structured** | **Ill-Structured** |
| **Type of Conflict** | Set piece Cold War Battle (GDP) | Contemporary conventional threat (OIF Ground War) | War on terrorism, counterinsurgency, failed or failing states |
| **Information** | All required info available | Some usable information available | Little or no usable information |
| **Definition of Problem** | Well defined | Partially defined | No clear formulation appears possible |
| **Variables / Complexity** | Linear, few variables, relatively easy analysis | More variables, more difficult to analyze problem | Asymmetric, sheer number of variables makes analysis difficult |
| **Solution to the problem** | "Algebraic:" formula or algorithm that fits the problem | Solution requires some creativity, may require assumptions | Problem requires multiple solutions applied over time |
| **The Answer** | Verifiable, routine | Not routine, difficult to verify correctness | Problem of prediction, cannot verify the answer |
| **Time Horizon** | Relatively short | Medium | Very long |

Figure 1. Problem Structure[10]

Today's ill-structured problems are manifested in the Long War.  OIF and the numerous operations encapsulated by OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM are examples of ill-structured problems.  Historically, the military viewed these missions as "aberrations[s] distracting from the military's real business of major conventional combat operations against

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[10] Adapted from United States Army, *FM 5-0,* p. 2-5.

similarly disposed armed forces of other states."[11]  Consequently, our doctrine and planning

tools have failed to evolve and adjust to the new environment.

Current military planning doctrine contains, and to varying degrees relies, on Cold

War carry-overs and anachronisms.  These procedures were not designed around ill-struc-

tured problems, therefore, the underlying assumptions that govern these procedures fail to

account for the complex structures, variables, and interactions that are the hallmarks of

contemporary problems.  The doctrinal templates used during the Joint Intelligence

Preparation of the Battlefield (JIPB) provide a good example.  When the United States faced

an enemy on the other side of the Iron Curtain, military planners could account for most of

the battlefield variables and structural aspects by developing rigid doctrinal templates that

encapsulated how the enemy would think, maneuver, and fight.  These doctrinal templates

were at the very heart of the decision making process, and are of little use in today's world.

Military planning doctrine also fails to adequately address and incorporate the historic origins

of a conflict.  As Americans, our own cultural perspective leads us to view even long-

standing conflicts as discrete crises.  While history is particularly important when combating

an insurgency, the analysis of any conflict requires a "practical, historically-grounded social,

economic, and political analysis, combined with sound understanding of the cultural context"

in which the conflict takes place.[12]

Another facet of contemporary conflict is that each problem is unique.  There is no

longer a one-size-fits-all analytic template.[13]  The singular nature of these conflicts makes it

increasingly difficult to apply a standard planning process to develop a standard solution.  An

example of this singularity is the two wars fought simultaneously in North and South Yemen

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[11] Waghelstein, 5.
[12] Ibid., 3.
[13] Ibid., 3-4.

during the mid 1960s.  Both wars occurred within the same corner of the Arabian Peninsula and were fought by people of the same race, language, culture, and tribal affiliations, both striving for the same objectives.  Despite the commonalities, both conflicts assumed extremely localized characters.  In the North, Royalists fought to expel Egyptian intervention forces while South Yemenis waged a terror campaign against the British in Aden.[14]  Military planning models that strive for universal applicability will not work equally well for all problems.  Finally, U.S. military planning doctrine relies on the tangible and quantifiable measures of combat (e.g. linear orders of battle and standard tables of organization and equipment).  As battlefields become more complex, planners must do a better job incorporating the intangible aspects of combat.

**The Impact of Culture and Society**

Culture and society are two of these intangibles that are becoming increasingly more important to any analysis.  Historically, the U.S. military has had a difficult time assessing the impact of culture and society because "the importance of cultural differences…[are] particularly difficult to untangle from the many other factors affecting the reality and perception of hostile behavior."[15]  When planners did attempt to analyze the socio-cultural attributes of our enemy, the results were generally from perfect.  Norville de Atkine noted that "including culture in strategic assessment has a poor legacy, for it has often been spun from an ugly brew of ignorance, wishful thinking, and mythology… [and] tends to lead to

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[14] Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 47-57; David M. Witty, "A Regular Army in Counterinsurgency Operations: Egypt in North Yemen, 1962-1967," *The Journal of Military History*, 65, no. 2 (April 2001), 401-439.
[15] Stephen Peter Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security*, 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 9.

wild distortions."[16] Despite the difficulties, planners ignore socio-cultural impacts at their peril. Dr. Pollack believes that American planning doctrine assumes:

> that any given state will conduct its military operations in exactly the same fashion as we would because we assert that our own behavior – at least in military operations – is governed entirely purely by reason and the objective consideration of our situation, but not by cultural values. As a result, we consistently misread the capabilities and intentions of foreign powers and are baffled when they consistently conduct military operations better, worse, or just different from our own.[17]

Culture can be defined as the "set of learned, shared values, patterns of behavior, and cognitive processes developed by a community over the course of history."[18] Because culture represents the mid-point around which individual behavior will vary, it best describes the decisions and actions made by groups of people over time, and not necessarily the individual actions of a single person. Even within a seemingly homogenous group of people, culture will vary from sub-group to sub-group. But there will emerge a dominant culture that, like individuals, acts as a "regional mean around which national cultures will vary."[19] Furthermore, it is important to understand that "*culture is not static*; it evolves over time as the community reacts to new experiences."[20] Cultures also interact with each other, and no group of people can "claim exclusiveness and specificity to the point of having nothing to do with other cultures."[21] These concepts are important when analyzing an Arab culture that changed significantly following World War I due to industrialization, modernization, increased exposure to Western thought and ideas, and decolonization.

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[16] Norville de Atkine, "Why Arabs Lose Wars," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 4, no. 1 (March 2000): 16.

[17] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 764.

[18] Ibid., 37.

[19] Ibid., 40.

[20] Ibid., 38.

[21] Mansour Khalid, "The Sociocultural Determinants of Arab Diplomacy," in *Arab and American Cultures,* ed. George N. Atiyeh (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1977), 138.

Culture is important, and it influences the perceptions, motivations, and actions of an enemy. During OIF II in Baghdad, Major General Peter Chiarelli (Commanding Task Force Baghdad) stated that "understanding the effect of operations as seen through the lens of the Iraqi culture and psyche [was] a foremost planning consideration for every operation."[22] To study the impact of culture on Arab military effectiveness, Dr. Pollack analyzed eight characteristics of the dominant Arab culture and evaluated their impact on twenty-four measures of military effectiveness by analyzing the military performance of five Arab states from 1945 to 1991.[23] The eight characteristics of the dominant culture are conformity, centralization of authority, deference to authority, group loyalty, manipulation of information, atomization of knowledge, personal courage, and an aversion to manual labor and technical work.

*Conformity.* Group norms in Arab society have a powerful impact on individual actions. These norms serve as a guide for individual behavior. Conformity means that the functionality of the group becomes more important than individual concerns, and manifests itself in two ways. First, as conformity increases, creativity, innovation, imagination, and divergence from established patterns of conduct decrease (and would result in shame or ridicule). The precedence for conformity over creativity is so strong that it has "been institutionalized in unwritten but well-known codes in Arab society and in formal prohibitions in the *Shari'a* [Islamic law]."[24] Second, conformity generates an adherence to traditional patterns of behavior and a reverence for tradition and history that "often degenerates into resigned

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[22] Peter W. Chiarelli, "Winning the Peace: The Requirement for Full Spectrum Operations," *Military Review* (July-August 2005): 14-15.

[23] The countries evaluated by Dr. Pollack were Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The twenty-four measures of military effectiveness are summarized in Figure 2.

[24] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 51.

nostalgia."[25]  Consequently, important events throughout Arab history, even those that happened hundreds of years ago, continue to impact the collective Arab psyche.

*Centralization of Authority*.  Arab society is extremely hierarchal in nature, and is rooted in a rigid, patriarchal family structure.  Because the family unit so dominates Arab society, its influence has "contributed to the diffusion of patriarchal relations and to their application to similar situations within other social institutions."[26]  Much like the father as the head of a family, obedience to and respect for superiors regardless of the situation are expected and never questioned.  The result of centralization is that all power and control are concentrated at the top, delegation is never more than superficial, and all decisions made by lower levels must be referred back to the leader.  Because all direction comes from above, lateral communication and coordination are not only unnecessary, they are discouraged.

*Deference to Authority*.  Deference to authority is closely related to conformity and centralization.  Since all decisions must be approved prior to execution, subordinates tend to remain passive, fail to take initiative, and are not even expected to act independently.  The Arab concept of honor fosters this deference.  It is a "driving motive in many (some would say all) aspects of Arab life, and a failure to act honorably is punished with shame, which is to be avoided at all costs."[27]  An important distinction between Arab and American notions of honor is that honor and integrity are not synonymous terms in the Arab world.  Integrity is not a prerequisite for honor: in most situations it is completely acceptable to distort the truth or even lie in order to maintain one's honor.  A 1979 RAND study discovered that Arabs view unfortunate outcomes "as personal failures, whereas in other cultures they would be re-

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[25] Khalid, 133.
[26] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 53.
[27] Ibid., 55.

garded as risks worth taking in the deliberate search for novel solutions."[28]  This deference to authority paralyzes groups who cannot react to change without guidance and authorization from above.

*Group Loyalty*.  Like centralization of authority, group solidarity and loyalty are outgrowths of the primacy of the family above all else.  The general order of precedence for loyalties within Arab society is the family, the clan, the tribe, and lastly, the state.  As Arab societies become increasingly urban, neighborhood and community ties are slowly replacing the extended family structure of the clan and tribe.  This communal cohesion has been labeled as "undoubtedly the most desired value" among Arabs.[29]  With communal cohesion comes a lack of trust of anyone outside the group.  Within the Arab world, there exists a "strict dichotomy in tribal society between members of the tribe and outsiders, who are generally suspected of being malevolent until proven otherwise."[30]  Finally, individuals within a group always reserve the highest honor for the highest ranking member of the group.

*Manipulation of Information*.  The Arab view of information and intelligence is another cultural trait dominated by their concept of honor.  Arab culture "places a premium on politeness and socially 'correct' behavior."[31]  As a result, "truth" becomes an abstract concept that generally takes a back seat to maintaining harmony and cohesion within the group.  Regardless of the reason, it is generally considered impolite or shameful to disagree with a superior, or to tell him that a particular request or order cannot be accomplished.  This fear of shame contributes to the secrecy and compartmentalization of knowledge in order to conceal mistakes and failings.  Many Arabs also view information as a "form of power, allowing

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[28] Ibid., 56.
[29] Khalid, 127.
[30] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 58.
[31] Ibid.

them to enforce their authority over their subordinates and gain leverage over their peers."[32] The result is that information is horded, not disseminated to those who need it, and consistently exaggerated or falsified.

*Atomization of Knowledge*.  The term "atomization" describes a "tendency among Arabs to see knowledge as a grouping of discrete details without recognizing the connections between those details."[33]  Arabs view collective knowledge, whether it be it day-to-day actions or elements of an operational campaign plan, as discrete events that are only "loosely linked in a sort of mechanical or even casual association by circumstances or by the mind of an individual, but having no organic interrelation of their own."[34]  The atomization of knowledge has two second order effects.  The first is manifested in a fatalistic view of the world expressed by the concept of *insha'Allah* (if Allah wills it).  The second is the difficulty that many Arabs have with interdisciplinary subjects such as combined arms and joint warfare.

*Personal Courage*.  Personal courage is also closely linked to the concept of honor.  Arabs are bound by honor to come to the aid of family members (or the members of other close knit groups) regardless of the circumstances.  Any failure to do so would result in shame.  Among Arab men there exists a "'cult of honor' that includes strength, material or moral power, courage, and the 'capacity and the will to defend the independence of the group.'"[35]  Concepts related to personal courage are moral discipline and the ability to endure extreme hardships.  This "cult of honor" exerts considerable influence on the actions of individuals, especial those involved in a struggle.

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[32] Pollack, *Arabs at War,* 561.
[33] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 60.
[34] Ibid., 61.
[35] Ibid., 62.

*Aversion to Manual Labor and Technical Work.*  Although an aversion to manual labor and technical work is not unique to Arab societies, it does have a stronger influence in the Arab world than in many others.  Arabs are beset by a "common and very deep-seated feeling that manual or rural forms of work mean drudgery and… [that] there is an element of degradation in them."[36]  Some authors have gone so far as to say "Arab society despises manual work: members of traditional families would prefer to starve than to be shamed by engaging in a humble occupation."[37]  Another aspect of this aversion is that administrative and clerical jobs are viewed as superior to technical and scientific occupations.

*Social Structure.*  Closely related to culture is the structure of Arab society and its impact on both the ability of Arab nations to generate combat power, and their effectiveness during combat.  Social structure is a broad term that includes groupings such as social classes, occupational specialties, caste-type organizations, and tribal affiliations.  It is important because "in all cultures dominant social structures exist that can affect the capacity for collective action…. [I]n the military realm, variations in the divisiveness of the dominant social structures can affect the amount of military power that can be generated from a given level of material resources."[38]  Despite the outward appearance of homogeneity in Arab societies, the internal divides are numerous and deep.

When assessing the impact of society on the military, Stephen Rosen noted that military effectiveness is maximized when the military does not reflect the competing elements of society, when it is isolated from politics, and when it is administered and utilized in an objective and professional manner.[39]  A state's armed forces are more likely to reflect the struc-

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[36] Ibid., 63.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Rosen, 26.
[39] Ibid., 16.

ture of the society from which they originate (and hence be less effective) when they are mass, non-professional organizations with high personnel turn over rates; are relatively large compared to society; and when the norms and structures of the military are governed by something other than military effectiveness (e.g. regime stability or maintaining internal stability). States that fight wars with high casualty rates also have limited military effectiveness because they must replace losses quickly, decreasing the training and indoctrination time for new conscripts.[40] One does not need to look far to see the obvious impact that the structure of Arab society has on Arab military forces.

*The Impact*. When the measures of military effectiveness are evaluated against the characteristics of the dominant Arab culture, the results are not surprising (see Figure 2). Dr. Pollack concluded that "certain patterns of behavior fostered by the dominant Arab culture were the most important factors contributing to the limited military effectiveness of Arab armies and air forces from 1945 to 1991.[41]

**Relooking Current Doctrine**

Culture and society play important roles in the capacity of a nation to generate combat power, and in its ability to employ that combat power during hostilies. They also have a profound influence on the individuals engaged in the fighting. Understanding the importance of culture and society, where and how do joint and service doctrine incorporate them in the planning process? The truth is that they do not.

*Joint Publication (JP) 5-0: Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, defines the Commander's Estimate of the Situation as "a logical process of reasoning by which a commander

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[40] Ibid., 29.
[41] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 63.

considers all the circumstances affecting the military situation and arrives at a decision as to

a course of action…"[42] It also states that the same general procedures apply to both war and

| ⇓ = Negative Impact<br>⇔ = Neutral Impact<br>⇑ = Positive Impact | Conformity | Deference | Centralization | Manipulation | Atomization | Group Loyalty | Technical Work | Courage | Assessment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Creativity and Innovation** | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | Poor |
| **Information Flow** | | | | ⇓ | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | Poor |
| **Intel Collection & Analysis** | | ⇓ | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | Poor |
| **Initiative** | ⇓ | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | ⇓ | | | Poor |
| **Centralization/Delegation** | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | | | Poor |
| **Maneuver** | ⇔ | ⇓ | | | | ⇔ | | ⇑ | Poor |
| **Employment of Armor** | ⇓ | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | ⇔ | Poor |
| **Employment of Artillery** | ⇓ | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | ⇔ | Poor |
| **Air-to-Air Operations** | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | | ⇓ | | Poor |
| **Air-to-Ground Operations** | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | ⇓ | | ⇓ | | Poor |
| **Ad Hoc Operations** | ⇓ | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | | ⇔ | Poor |
| **Set-Piece Operations** | ⇔ | ⇔ | ⇔ | | | ⇔ | | ⇔ | Adequate |
| **Combined Arms** | | | | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | ⇔ | Poor |
| **Unit Cohesion** | | | | | | ⇑ | | ⇑ | Good |
| **Personal Bravery** | | | | | | | | ⇑ | Good |
| **Maintenance and Repair** | | | | | ⇓ | | ⇓ | | Poor |
| **Assimilation of Equipment** | | | | | ⇓ | | ⇓ | | Poor |
| **Logistics** | | | ⇔ | | | | ⇔ | | Uneven |
| **Combat Engineering** | | | | | | ⇑ | ⇑ | ⇔ | Good |
| **Tech Support / R&D** | | | | | | | ⇓ | | Poor |
| **Operational Security** | | ⇔ | ⇔ | ⇔ | | ⇔ | | | Good |
| **Leadership** | ⇓ | ⇓ | ⇓ | | ⇓ | | | | Poor |
| **Preferred Op Tempo** | | ⇓ | ⇓ | | | | | | Slow |
| **Unit/Service Coordination** | | | ⇓ | | ⇓ | ⇔ | ⇓ | | Poor |

Figure 2. Cultural Assessment[43]

[42] The Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 5-0, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, (Fort Monroe, Va.: Joint Doctrine Center, April 1995), pp. GL-4 – GL-5.

[43] Adapted from Pollack, "Arab Culture," Chapter 11: Did the Arab Militaries Perform as the Four Theories Predicted, pp. 541-586; Diagram 2a. Hypothesis Derived from Selected Patterns of Behavior of the Dominant Arab Culture, p. 76; and Table 11a. Summary of Patterns of Arab Military Effectiveness since 1945, p. 579.

military operations other than war (MOOTW).  The most obvious place to incorporate cultural and social characteristics of an enemy into the plan is during the JIPB.

JIPB is conducted to enable the commander and staff to "visualize the **full** spectrum of adversary capabilities and potential courses of action across **all** dimensions of the battlespace."[44]  *JP 2-01.3: Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Preparation of the Battlespace* cautions that "the failure to identify all the relevant characteristics [of the enemy] may lead to the joint force being surprised and unprepared when some overlooked feature of the battlespace exerts an influence" on the force's ability to accomplish the mission.[45]  That being said, *JP 2-01.3* devotes less than two pages to the socio-cultural dimension of the battlefield.  During the second step of the JIPB process, Describe the Battlespace Effects, *JP 2-01.3* identifies a Human Dimension of the Battlespace that consists of "military significant sociological, cultural, demographic, and psychological characteristics" of the enemy and their leadership.  It provides planners with a two step method to assess the role of culture and society: 1) identify and assess human characteristics that may have an impact on behavior, and 2) evaluate these effects on military operations.[46]  *JP 2-01.3* also devotes a chapter to the special JIPB considerations during MOOTW.  Here it recognizes that the historical context of the conflict is important and it identifies "pertinent demographic and economic issues, including living conditions, religious beliefs, cultural distinctions, allocation of wealth, political grievances, social status, or political differences" as potential aspects to consider.[47]  Once

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[44] The Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 2-01.3, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace*, (Fort Monroe, Va.: Joint Doctrine Center, May 2000), p. vii. (Emphasis original).
[45] The Joint Staff, *JP 2-01.3,* p. II-2.
[46] Ibid., p. II-37.
[47] Ibid., p. V-5.

again, however, the doctrine fails to provide guidance on how to incorporate these considerations into the planning process.

*JP 3-07: Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* also provides a superficial consideration of culture and society by devoting one chapter to MOOTW planning considerations. It begins by indicating that the same planning procedures are used for all operations, conventional and MOOTW alike: "Plans for MOOTW are prepared in a similar manner as plans for war."[48] Perhaps the most insightful guidance in *JP 3-07* is that contemporary planning "will require a depth of expertise in (and a mental and psychological integration with) all aspects of the operational environment's people and their cultures, politics, religion, economics, and related factors."[49] Like *JP 2-01.3*, *JP 3-07* hints that some conflicts may require a different focus, but stops short of discussing the mechanics of that change, or how to incorporate it into operational planning.

## Recommendations

Given the current limitations of joint and service doctrine, what can the military do to better incorporate both cultural and social attributes of an adversary into our planning process? Dr. Gary Klein argues that "it is time to admit that the theories and ideas of decision making we have held over the past 25 years are inadequate and misleading, having produced unused decision aids, ineffective decision training programs, and inappropriate doctrine."[50] Is current doctrine flawed beyond use?

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[48] The Army's version of JP 3-07 (FM 3-07) is less subtle about the planning process: "Commanders plan for stability operations and support operations in a manner like they plan for the offense and the defense" (p. 2-1). The Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, (Fort Monroe, Va.: Joint Doctrine Center, June 1995), p. IV-1.

[49] The Joint Staff, *JP 3-07*, p. IV-2.

[50] Gary Klein, "Strategies of Decision Making," *Military Review* (May 1989): 56.

Given that much of the problem seems to lie within the structure of current planning doctrine, it is tempting to suggest that the military must develop a completely new planning process to better incorporate and asses the battlefield's intangible variables. At best, this is a long term solution. Changing the way services plan major operations would require a complete rewrite of existing doctrine and an overhaul of the military education system. Since there are only a limited number of seats for each service school, it would take several years to train enough people to incorporate a new system. Additionally, the service planning systems are deeply entrenched and it would take a tremendous effort to overcome institutional resistance to change. Given these limitations, however, there are alternative processes such as the action based and recognition-prime decision making models that could be taught along side the existing systems. [51] Understanding multiple planning methodologies would give planners increased flexibility by enabling them to chose the best planning process for the type of problem structure at hand.

Another possibility is to identify steps in the existing planning processes where cultural and social issues are considered. While not a substitute for developing a new planning system, this would make the existing systems more responsive to the myriad of threats and potential threats around the world. JIPB and service-level IPB must incorporate more aspects of cultural intelligence. Doctrinal (and the resulting situational) templates must be re-evaluated and updated for each threat and potential threat within a given area of operations. During mission analysis, planners must consider culture and society when developing implied tasks and determining essential tasks. The course of action (COA) development criteria should also be expanded to include more cultural input. Using culturally-based governing

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[51] Wilson A. Shoffner, "The Military Decision-Making Process: Time for a Change," (Monograph prepared for the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Ks., 2000) 21-23.

factors to evaluate the COAs (and ensuring that they are properly weighted with respect to the other governing factors) will also make the system more responsive. Finally, cultural issues must be included when assessing risk and appropriate risk mitigation factors must considered and implemented.

The military cannot expect its intelligence officers and personnel to be regional experts in every potential theater. An important and very valuable resource is the Foreign Area Officer (FAOs) program. FAOs acquire a regional specialization, language and cultural expertise, and personal contacts that the average military officer can never achieve due to frequent moves between jobs and locations. Trained FAOs can be reassigned from embassy and attaché positions to tactical and operational headquarters to assist with cultural assessments, training, and integration. As members of the planning staff, FAOs could provide tremendous insight into the cultural ramifications of U.S. or coalition operations within a particular area. Closely related to the use of FAOs is the increased use of vetted, indigenous cultural advisors. The ethnic diversity of the United States provides a wealth of people that could potentially assist military planners. While the majority lack military experience, their cultural insight as members (or former members) of the society that the military is trying to understand and plan against would be unmatched and prove extremely valuable. Cultural advisors must be thoroughly vetted to ensure that they do not harbor personal agendas, biases, or vendettas that could influence their decisions and recommendations (e.g. Ahmed Chalabi's "intelligence" and information leading into OIF). FAOs and cultural advisors could be incorporated into the Information Operations staff where their expertise could be used across a wide variety of functions (see Figure 3).
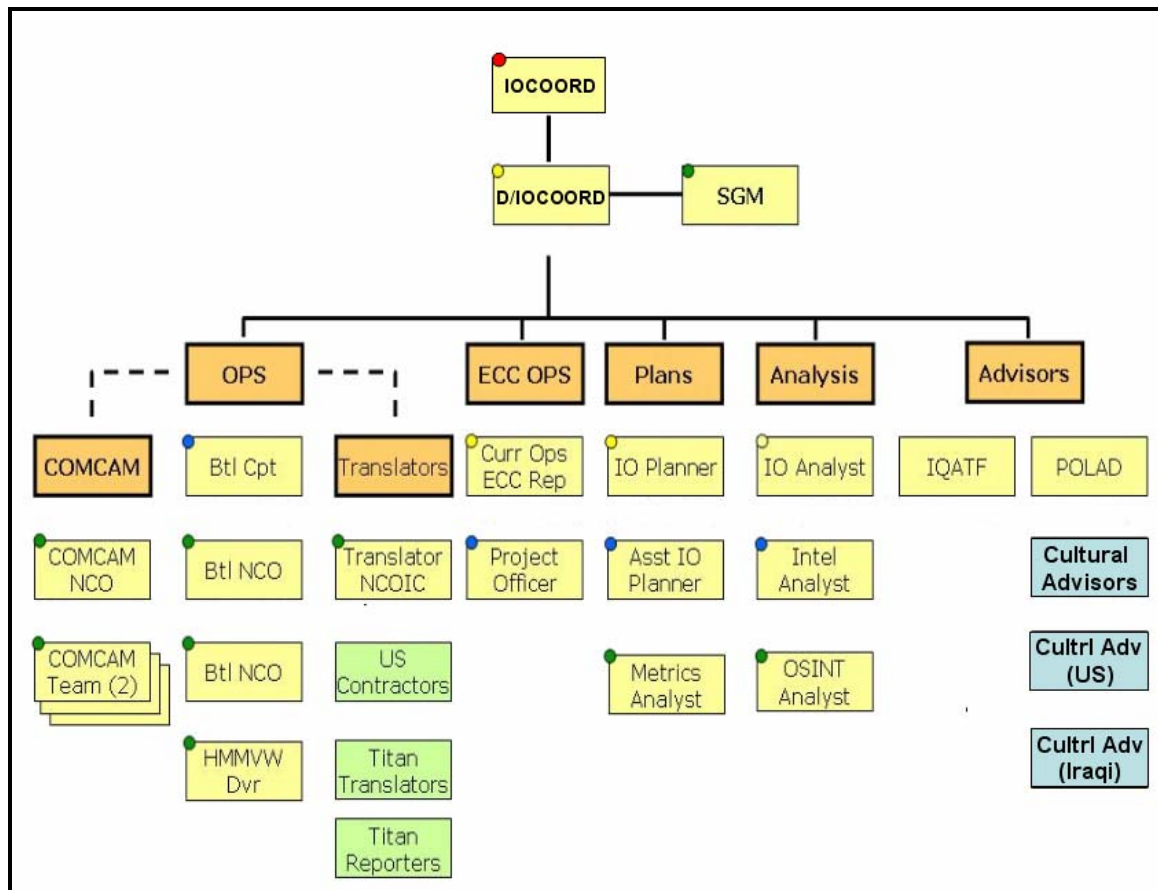
Figure 3. Integration of Cultural Advisors into the IO Staff[52]

Finally, the military must provide more opportunities for Advanced Civil Schooling for our officers and senior non-commissioned officers. While FAOs and cultural advisors are tremendous assets for a commander, their potential lack of understanding of maneuver warfare and operational art could limit the usefulness of their input. By educating officers and non-commissioned officers in fields such as international relations, political science, and sociology, services can develop leaders that understand the impact of culture and society on

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[52] Peter W. Chiarelli, "Task Force Baghdad: Operation Iraqi Freedom II" (briefing presented to the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, Va., 5 April 2005).

military operations and vise versa. The institutional military education system must keep up with the operational military currently engaged in combat throughout the world today.

**Conclusion**

Why is it important that the United States armed forces begin to better understand and incorporate culture and society into our planning systems? At the tactical level, the answer is clear – to develop better plans to defeat our enemies and to save lives. During the First Cavalry Division's deployment as Task Force Baghdad, the Division leadership understood that the reality of combat in Iraq was that "no matter what the outcome of a combat operation, for every insurgent put down, the potential exists to grow many more if cultural mitigation is not practiced."[53] At the operational and strategic level, the answer is more ambiguous, but equally important: "If the United States is to gauge its position in the world accurately and to develop appropriate forces and strategies, we must understand the military power that can be generated by societies with which we are not familiar."[54]

In order to better incorporate culture and society, it is imperative that services start with their planning doctrine. While developing and implementing an entirely new process is not realistic, the existing processes can be modified to better account for intangible variables such as culture and society. The military must make increased use of our resident expertise in FAOs and cultural advisors. Finally, the military must expand its educational system to give leaders the skills they need to operate on a complex battlefield. Dr. Pollack concluded

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[53] Chiarelli, "Winning the Peace," 9.
[54] Rosen, 31.

his study on Arab culture with the following admonishment:

> …incorporating cultural effects is crucial.  The best analysts do it instinctively, but it is ridiculous to assume that we will have such men and women in the right places to make the right judgments when it is vital to do so.  Consequently, it is of considerable importance to begin to try to tackle how to best include cultural influence in military analysis so that this becomes a universal phenomenon, just as the influence of culture on military effectiveness is.[55]

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[55] Pollack, "Arab Culture," 764.

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