Strategy Research Project

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AND THE USE OF INDIGENOUS ARMIES

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **15 MAR 2008**	2. REPORT TYPE **Strategy Research Project**	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Understanding Culture in the Role of Indigenous Armies**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S) **John Dolan**	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
See attached

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**44**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AND THE USE OF INDIGENOUS ARMIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Understanding Culture in the Role of Indigenous Armies

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 4 March 2008   WORD COUNT: 9,412   PAGES: 44

KEY TERMS: Security Assistance, Stability Operations

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

This paper addresses the importance of understanding culture, and how planning and current programs fall short of meeting the needs of the U.S. Armed forces. It proposes three recommendations for correcting these deficiencies. These recommendations include establishing competent assessment and planning cells, developing applicable and adequate training programs for U.S. personnel, which are geared towards building and leveraging indigenous forces in securing regional stability. It begins with an historical overview of U.S. efforts to increase regional stability by building indigenous forces. The paper includes a discussion of successes and failures in the Philippines, Vietnam, South America, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The primary focus is on historical efforts to train and field indigenous forces, and through presentation of cultural themes, convince the reader, that planners at all levels must consider cultural influences in the selected region, and most certainly in the establishment of host nation military forces.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS IN BUILDING INDIGENOUS ARMIES

> An army without culture is a dull-witted army, and a dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy."
>
> —Mao Zedong

Introduction

United States participation in global conflict over the last several decades has necessitated the army's involvement in training indigenous forces. Military forces were established for the purpose of insuring the stability of governments considered legitimate in terms of U. S. interests. These endeavors resulted in varied degrees of success based upon the level of effort and commitment to the region in question. Our ability to leave behind a competent military force which is representative of the people and government it serves comes into question based upon our previous efforts. Unless we are willing to analyze historical models and how our understanding of the cultural terrain and level of commitment either succeeded or failed, we are doomed to perpetual failure in strategic planning. The purpose of this paper is to provide some insight on historical efforts to train and field indigenous forces, and through presentation of cultural themes, convince the reader, that planners at all levels must consider cultural influences in the selected region, and most certainly in the establishment of host nation military forces. Primary information sources will be review of literature, original studies, and in the case of Afghanistan and the Afghan National Army (ANA), my own experience working with the first nine battalions of the ANA trained at the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC).

I will begin with an historical overview of U.S. efforts to increase regional stability by building indigenous forces. This will include successes and failures in the Philippines,

Vietnam, South America, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I will then address the importance of culture and how existing programs, resources, and planning, fall short of meeting the needs of U.S. Armed forces and its enablers. Finally, I will propose three recommendations for correcting these short comings moving forward into the future. These recommendations will include establishing competent assessment and planning cells, and developing applicable and adequate training programs for U.S. personnel which are geared towards building and leveraging indigenous forces in securing regional stability.

Understanding regional culture is critical throughout the six planning phases. In order to shape, deter, seize the initiative, dominate, stabilize and enable civil authority, insight into the perspective of local populations is essential. It is this knowledge which allows planners to operate within the appropriate social context, providing a better assessment of both the civilian population and enemy forces. It helps to assess, "their vulnerabilities to both kinetic and non kinetic weapons, predict their behavior and craft effects-based operations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels." [1] Understanding the friendly population and military forces which provide security for reconstruction insures the U.S. military is free to operate against insurgents with the support of the people. It is this consideration which makes analysis of historical endeavors in building local forces essential to calculating practical solutions.

History of Building Foreign Armies

In analyzing the past we find many success stories and numerous reoccurring themes which portray a pattern of failure where the potential for success was within grasp. U.S. deployments in areas of Africa, the Caribbean, the Balkans, South America

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and the Middle East, have provided us opportunities to learn, "how and why people fight each other, and whether they are friendly or hostile to U.S. forces."[2] Currently, our nation is still attempting to turn members of the native populations of Afghanistan and Iraq into military and security forces. After the U.S. invasion and dominance of Iraqi ground forces, leaders opted to dismantle the Iraqi army. This decision arguably led to an overall lack of security where criminal elements thrived in a chaotic environment. Establishing new military, police, and security forces has been slow and success varied.[3]

It is important to closely scrutinize past examples of U.S. efforts in building and fielding indigenous armies in support of its objectives. The conflicts I will present include the Philippines, Vietnam, South America, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Each conflict could be considered a significant study on its own. However, a simple overview of these five conflicts reveals a common ground for analysis, where clearly identifiable opportunities for success and points of failure are present. Each campaign provides examples of U.S. efforts to build native forces. I will discuss successful and failed initiatives and link them to the primary reason for the outcome based upon findings in literature. This information is important in that it provides policy makers, military leaders, and strategic planners, with a background of U.S. involvement in conflict where cultural implications were scarcely understood.

Philippines

As the 19th century came to an end, the U.S. entered into war with Spain. Quickly seizing assets in the Pacific and Caribbean, the U.S. was faced with a decision on the disposition of the Philippines. President McKinley initially sought to secure the

Philippines due to U. S. interests in the region and a fear that a colonial power would claim the islands. Though no defined policy existed, a Presidential study commissioned on the Philippines determined that a peaceful, independent, and self governed democracy should be set as a long term goal. There would be no immediate independence.[4] The U.S. army quickly found itself engaged in operations against insurgents in the Philippines. Filipino Nationalist hoping to seize this opportunity for independence led to three more years of conflict which would eventually end in 4,234 U.S. casualties.[5] The same insurgents, who had helped facilitate the U.S. force's victory over Spain, now challenged the legitimacy of American occupation.[6] Seeking to achieve stability and enable civilian authority would prove a difficult task. During the first year, efforts by U.S. Commander, Major General Elwell Otis revolved around civic action programs which appeared to pacify the region. This temporary lull would end when guerillas stepped up activities in an effort to impact U.S. politics during the 1900 elections. The insurgents failed and a new commanding general with a new philosophy would take command in December of 1900.

After a difficult first year, Major General McArthur significantly increased pressure by implementing General Order 100. This strict measure of control subjected both guerilla combatants and their supporters to execution.[7] This and other harsh actions designed to separate guerillas from the population and support eventually broke the back of the insurgency. Guerillas had to deal with the lack of support and the population was forced to take sides. By exploiting their class, geographic, and ethnic groupings, American forces were able to use natural conflicts within the population to establish viable military and police forces.[8]

U.S. Forces fighting insurgents in the Philippines were far more effective when augmented by the indigenous population. These forces trained alongside the same American counterparts they would fight with against rebel forces.[9] Effective indigenous operations included the capture of insurgent leader Emilio Aguinaldo by Filipino scouts disguised as insurgents, the arrest of 7,422 insurgents by Manila police and the establishment of around 550 additional garrisons for control of the Philippine battle space.[10] The population also contributed to the stabilization efforts. As the U.S. gained ground against the insurgents, the people gradually shifted their support toward U.S. efforts. Eventually the population would serve in a wide variety of military augmentation and intelligence support roles.[11] Success in putting the indigenous face on military operations coupled with continued U.S. efforts in multiple civil military projects resulted in quelling the rebellion. This approach was only partially implemented in Vietnam and the results yielded would be limited by the level of commitment of the U.S. government and will of the people.

Vietnam

"In Vietnam, the 'hearts and minds' campaigns meant to co-opt or prevent enemy activities relied on cultural information, understanding, and appropriate countermeasures."[12] These campaigns were exceptionally complex in nature. Broad political, economic, and social initiatives geared towards gaining public support were complicated by the cultural dynamics at play.[13] The various Montagnard tribes of Vietnam's Central Highlands were the regions first occupants. They were dislodged from fertile agricultural regions by later waves of ethnic Vietnamese who settled in the lower regions of what would become the Republic of (South) Vietnam (GVN). I will focus

on these two ethnic group's interaction with members of the U.S. Army Civic Action and Marine Combined Action teams against a historical backdrop of Colonial French occupation and aggression by, "the Peoples' Liberation Army of (North) Vietnam (NVA), and their South Vietnamese auxiliaries, the National Liberation Front or Viet Cong (VC)."[14]

Several layers of government bureaucracy existed in the GVN management of economic, agricultural, health and security functions in Vietnam. Corps, provincial, and district chiefs were assigned to posts based upon the favor they held with their superiors in Saigon.[15] The degree of success often depended on the resources and amount of security provide by the U. S. military. Providing security proved far more difficult than the delivery of material goods. It required securing the confidence, friendship and loyalty of the people in the area of operations. This mutually beneficial arrangement provided security to U.S. forces as well. The collective effort served to deny insurgent forces access to support and concealment.[16]

By 1967 U.S. military ground operations reached its peak. That same year, Senator J. W. Fulbright released his book, *The Arrogance of Power.* His book, critical of America's Vietnam policy, recommends that the U.S. abandon hostilities and pursue peace through facilitating talks between the GVN and the VC.[17] Some characterized the American war effort as authoritarian and lacking in cultural understanding. This conflict was unlike World War II and Korean campaigns, "it required of its leaders a willingness to learn about foreign culture systems and readiness to try new approaches."[18] Two such initiatives were the U.S. Army Civic Action Teams and Marine Combined Action teams working with Montagnard and Vietnamese populations.

U. S. Army Civic action teams in Vietnam were given a high degree of autonomy. This was a result of little cultural understanding and minimal competence or experience with these types of operations being resident within the traditional army. Civic action was an additional mission assigned to the conventional force. Commanders were frustrated by these operations because personnel were taken out of already undermanned units, and soldiers assigned to Civic Action Teams "had a different perspective."[19]

The work conducted by these teams in the Vietnam Highlands appeared small in scale but yielded significant results in gaining trust and fostering intercultural understanding.[20] The Montagnards were open to the efforts of American soldiers working in their region. They already had positive feelings toward the Western culture because of their exposure to the French. In fact, many older Montagnard men had actually served with the French Army. The approach to this program was simple, civic action teams assisted the Montagnard population in improving their own situation. Progress in this effort continued to build trust with the indigenous population, but it was not without cost in regard to the U.S. relationship to some in the GVN.

Stress between the GVN and Montagnards was deep and ongoing. This conflict was exacerbated by U.S. efforts to educate and enable the highland tribes. The South Vietnamese were threatened by programs which improved Montagnard ability to govern and think for themselves. Cooperation with U.S. forces often led to harassment for highland peoples who requested weapons and barrier materials to defend themselves. GVN had concerns over arming them, pressuring the U.S. to provide barrier materials only.[21] The South Vietnamese looked down at the mountain people who they had

mistrusted for centuries. The harder the U. S. pushed to reconcile the indigenous population with the supported GVN government, the more resentment grew; this was not the desired effect.[22] One illustration of this type of interaction shows a U.S civic action officer attempting to build confidence and loyalty to the Vietnamese government by inviting military and civilian representatives to speak to Montagnards at a community gathering. Instead of taking the opportunity to strengthen bonds, the senior Vietnamese representative berated and threatened the people.[23] Such interaction left the villagers vulnerable to VC incursions, reduced the legitimacy of the GVN and limited their control of territory within South Vietnam.

An example of how this type of conflict damaged the GVN government occurred in early January 1968. VC units surrounded a Montagnard village and held a Peoples' Court. Accused villagers were tried and condemned based on testimony and denunciation by terrorized and frightened neighbors. The guilty were killed in gruesome fashion after being forced to consume pieces of flesh from their own bodies. The U.S. had allowed the GVN to pressure them into leaving the Montagnards defenseless. However, this type of extreme effort politically undermined the VC. Their abuse of the people and wholesale slaughter of popular leaders hurt the legitimacy of their cause and turned supporters against them.[24] Around the time of the Tet offensive, some twenty villages asked for U.S. support in arming and securing their villages against VC and NVA aggression. The U.S. bypassed GVN objections to arming Montagnards by electing to support villagers with weapons and locating U.S. forces within the villages themselves. Over the next few months, intelligence from local tribesmen led to the successful annihilation of a NVA forces in the Pleiku region. This became, "a zone in

which, for a time, no enemy regular or guerilla units could survive.[25] Arguably the decision to support the Americans in this conflict was due to the effort and respect of civic action personnel. There was no push to change their cultural beliefs or pressure on them to act on behalf of U.S. interests. The move from neutrality was prompted by an obvious alternative to oppression and violent atrocities at the hands of the VC.[26]

In the example of Army civic action teams, three themes for failure emerge for consideration. The first is a failure to understand that U.S. influence over a few short years could not remedy the centuries of mutual distain between the Montagnard tribesman and the Vietnamese. The effects of aiding the mountain highlanders only served to increase friction between the two parties. Secondly, the American culture failed to take the long-term view in building relationships; they lacked the persistence and resolve needed to sustain programs which required time to succeed. Third, the overall program was founded on helping the Montagnards and while it is entirely possible that the civil action teams acted out of sincere desire to help these people, the desired end-state was to manipulate the tribal peoples. Ultimately American leadership acted in their own interests, seeking to influence the tribal peoples.[27]

Next I will discuss the combined action program (CAP) in Vietnam which consisted of U. S. Marine Corps (USMC) experiences in Haiti, Santa Domingo and Nicaragua between 1915 and 1933 incorporated host nation forces with Marine units to defeat insurgency.[28]

The Marine's CAP efforts in Vietnam were exceptionally effective at providing security to the local population by incorporating local indigenous forces and regular military units with a marine unit. Most often, a marine rifle squad was matched with a

platoon of indigenous forces. "Using a local village as a base, CAP units trained, patrolled, defended, and lived with indigenous forces, preventing guerillas from extracting rice, intelligence, and sanctuary from local towns and villages."[29]

One significant problem with this initiative was the minimal amount of training provided. A large part of learning was, "on-the-job training."[30] The one week Combined Action School in Vietnam was inadequate in preparing Marines for this assignment. It provided training but failed to include a fundamental language capability. The subsequent program of instruction provided in Da Nang extended the training to two weeks and included some language and cultural instruction.[31]

Some marines were fortunate in that they were educated at the Military Assistance Training Agency (MATA) course at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School at Fort Bragg, NC. This curriculum included 24 hours of Vietnamese language and cultural training taught by Vietnamese nationals each week.[32] Eventually the Marines established an advisory training program in Quantico, Virginia but the American instructors could not develop the same level or language proficiency in student as the MATA course.[33]

In the army program three reasons for failure were identified (cultural understanding, impatience and motive). The USMC initiative was not well planned or resourced. They failed to analyze earlier successes, allocate the requisite training time or provide the required assets insure the best training was provided.

South America

Between 1898 and 1935, early U.S. efforts to train and equip police and military units in Cuba, Panama, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua revealed a

different set of complex considerations. The units were designed to provide a defense against external threats and meet the internal security and law enforcement needs of these nations. Multi-purpose units loyal to the central government were intended to provide a moral and low cost security force capable of insuring continuous stability. Unfortunately these forces were not free from corruption, and U.S. forces were drawn back into the region to depose military dictators. In attempting to execute policy intent on developing another nation's political and societal structure, policy errors and cultural differences in turn led to the establishment of a new uncalculated threat."[34] It created well armed and organized forces capable of asserting their dominance into the political process.

Millet (2006) identified six lessons from the U.S. interventions in South America. These practical considerations seem obvious in retrospect. The first consideration is that of values. Views of what is of right and wrong vary from culture to culture. It is easy to provide the tactical and technical competency required for effective maneuver but transferring moral concepts based on Western values is far more difficult. The martial competency will surely be adapted to the prevalent indigenous culture. In essence, "It is easier to teach someone how to fire a weapon than when to fire it."[35]

Secondly the use of military forces in a domestic police role was a faulted concept. On the surface, a multi use force under central control appears easier to manage and cheaper to maintain. In fact the nature of central authority removes regional and local ties to the community.[36] While this problem may be exacerbated by the differences in South American culture, even our own Congress recognized the problems with military

participation in law enforcement activities. In 1878 they sought to restrict such activity through passing the legislation in Posse Comitatus. [37]

By focusing only on the military and neglecting broad reform in countries riddled with a dysfunctional judicial system and social equality issues, other government institutions can manipulate the military making them vehicles for abuse.[38] This contributes to the deterioration of social fabric opening the door to tyranny. This is in part due to a different view of loyalty. The concept of loyalty to the state is uniquely different in the Latin Americans. "The Latin tradition is that of conquistadores, not the U. S. militia tradition. Loyalty is given to one's immediate commander and then to the institution, not the government or constitution at large."[39]

Finally, it is important to consider the issue of transition, and how the absence of trainer influence allows for migration to traditional culture. When those who provided the materials and training depart the region, the reason for complying with imported norms leaves with them. The combination of cultural influence and military capability becomes dangerous when newly gained power succumbs to cultural norms. This is particularly true when the traditional culture is steeped in the present, void of long term ideological concerns for the nation and its people.[40] This leads to a national authority willing to use all instruments of power to gain and maintain total control.

Early failures in South America were not solely the fault of trainers. Though the officers conducting these missions were not well prepared to handle, "the cultural and political obstacles they encountered,"[41] the overall planning effort did little to consider the implications of involvement. Little importance was placed on understanding regional culture and preparing soldiers for the mission. The end result was a military force which

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often created more problems than they solved. "Like Iraq and Afghanistan, these countries lack a real heritage of democracy rule, and civil society was feeble and deeply divided."[42]

Afghanistan

It is too early to determine whether efforts in Afghanistan will yield the desired results. Can a region void of resources, industrial capability, a modern road system, or access to the sea establish stability and secure its borders from fanatical insurgents? More importantly can this nation emerge from years of violent warfare to find long elusive peace, when words for such concepts as rule of law are largely absent in Arabic and in the various languages of Afghanistan.[43]

After an intense bombing campaign in October of 2001, the Northern Alliance in conjunction with U.S. Special Forces operators began to sweep across Afghanistan. Conventional U.S. and NATO forces soon joined the fight quickly pushing the Taliban government from power. As the Taliban, its supporters and other foreign insurgents fled into the hiding, a new challenge developed. Forces supporting the U.S. action began to posture themselves for regional control. A web of complex alliances and quiet associations created mistrust and a dangerous landscape for the new Transition Government of Afghanistan to navigate. The situation in 2003 could be summed up as follows.

> Russia is sending military equipment directly to Afghanistan's minister of defense, Abdul Qasim Fahim, instead of supplying the newly constituted Afghan National Army. Iran, in addition to resuming its funding of Ismail Khan of Herat, has also been accused of giving refuge to members of Al-Qaeda fleeing U. S. troops in Afghanistan. The ethnic Uzbek deputy minister of defense, Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum, a former Communist militia commander who joined the Northern Alliance, is seeking aid from Uzbekistan and Turkey to either maintain or increase his control of much

of northern Afghanistan. Thus the change of government in Afghanistan has not yet led to an improved security environment.[44]

For all intents and purposes Afghanistan had reverted back to traditional tribal authority. It is from these regions that the ANA would have to be established.

Early establishment of the ANA depended on the support of regional warlords who the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the U.S. Office of Military Cooperation – Afghanistan (OMC-A) sought to appease. The MOD began providing soldiers to fill the ANA in May of 2002. Each of the soldiers arriving at KMTC were screened by MOD physicians and then vetted and sent to Kabul by the various warlords governing the 34 Afghan provinces. Ethnic composition was supposed to be balanced within the battalions, but the difficulty of transporting, holding, and screening these men made achieving the precise mix nearly impossible. The ethnic composition included about 27 percent Tajik, 42 percent Pashtun, 10 percent Hazara, 7 percent Uzbek, and 14 miscellaneous other ethnic groups. This was averaged after attrition due to screening, desertion and training loss.

U.S. Special Forces cadre would develop and continue to refine a 10 week program of instruction designed to build Afghan battalions capable of conducting operations at a company level. The core instruction included human rights, ethics, small arms and common tasks. Additional training covered mortars, machine gun, recoilless rifles, communications, medical, maintenance, and platoon and company level tactics. Initial training stopped when the units where shipped to garrisons in the Kabul region. The lack of trainer interaction, infrastructure, and cultural awareness lead to enormous losses due to desertion. With assumption of the ANA training mission, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne) focused on retraining, increasing manning and

garnishing better resources for the first 9 battalions. Gradual introduction of ANA forces to security, support for military civic-action, and traditional combat operations improved competence and unit cohesiveness[45].

Equipment was desperately needed to effectively deploy ANA forces. Though the U.S. provided the bulk of most classes of supply, uniforms, field gear, munitions and most weapons systems came from Europe, the Balkans and partners in Ukraine. Conspicuously absent was assistance from Middle Eastern nations with the exception of the United Arab Emirates which contributed much needed vehicles. Through the middle of February 2003, over 1 million short tons of donated military goods were processes by the fifth battalion support company. These materials and the munitions begrudgingly provided by the well armed warlords would provide a foundation logistical support to the ANA.

Rebuilding this army in the face of significant political tension and severe social conditions would be difficult. "The rebuilding of a national army will have to be intertwined with the creation of a legitimate broad-based government, economic reconstruction, and the demobilization process."[46] This of course should not neglect the cultural considerations in this unique region. Some of these issues were surfaced in our efforts to curb losses in the ANA. Our battalion leadership and staff expressed these concerns to the Chief of OMC-A in Kabul, but these matters were quickly dismissed. Initial problems included the possibility that we were training soldiers only to have them return to the service of local warlords or that the pay was inadequate to support both a geographically displaced family and the soldier's needs at his duty station.[47] Our central argument was the fact that many of these young men saved their money for years to

prepare for marriage. The bride normally moved into the home of the young man's family. Problems resulted when transportation challenges were combined with religious holidays and a strong desire for the soldier to return home their family. We suggested alternative force structure placement of the soldiers to insure continued loyalty and service to the Afghan government.

Afghanistan's tribal and religious based structure lends itself to the development of seasonal armies and guerilla warfare. Afghanistan has historically relied on, "popular uprisings to fight foreign invasions and enlisted the aid of tribal levies to beef up the regular army to crush domestic rebellions."[48] A decentralized population and geographic restrictions left the population with a high degree of autonomy. They were dependant on the local and regional military forces which were generally mobilized for, "inter-tribal conflicts or foreign threats."[49] This made for a very difficult military history in Afghanistan. Occupation of Afghanistan would be nearly impossible without wide spread public support. However, any native government's attempt to truly administer the region has ended in eventual failure because it was unable to sustain a standing army large enough to control its own interior.

A soldier's loyalty to the tribe or local leader is more important than one's commitment to a central government. This made the Afghans fierce fighters when defending tribal areas with their kinsmen. Yet the same men integrated into a conventional military force of soldiers from other tribes have historically failed to stand their ground. Poor training, armament, compensation and leadership added to the difficulties that early Afghan forces experienced.[50] The key fact remains that throughout the entirety of Afghan's history, no successful attempt at forming a sustained

professional force exists. Forming a new army without a model or pattern compatible with cultural norms is problematic. Early efforts by the Afghans themselves met with failure.

Early pushes to force mandatory or voluntary enlistment failed. A weak and poorly resourced government was unable to enforce a draft system introduced in 1895.[51] In the 1920s, attempts by King Amanullah Khan to enforce the draft were widely unpopular. In fact the army itself deserted him in the face of tribal rebellion in 1929. This would signal the end of his reign. In 1941, Mohammed Zahir Shah, concerned with potential invasion during WW II, instituted a universal draft but the invasion never came. However, the force established kept him in power another thirty years. It was not necessarily a well organized force. It was normally comprised of a three tier system consisting of a regular army, tribal levies and local militia each with certain advantages depending on geography and purpose. Afghanistan has two significant challenges, "creating a national loyalty among the soldiers that would surpass their tribal allegiance, and providing the military units with the skills to fight effectively in both counterinsurgencies and conventional wars.[52]

The review of literature, as well as my own experiences in Afghanistan, brings me to the following four conclusions. First, history has shown this nation incapable of building and sustaining a professional force which is able to control the area inside its borders. It will require significant help in funding military and police forces capable of providing the requisite security. Second, the force created first holds allegiance to its tribal and regional leadership. A prolonged presence of trainers and support from U.S., NATO or U.S. forces is necessary to sustain security until a pattern of success and

tradition is established. Third, the regional warlords must be deprived of their regional

arms and forces. This is problematic but necessary. Finally, stronger consideration must

be given to the cultural and religious issues in building this army. These conclusions find

strong support within the Afghan community. Afghans currently display strong support

for increased Afghan military and police forces. They favor continued U.S. and NATO

presence until such time as they have a stable government and capable army. They see

the reduction of arms in the region as necessary.[53]

Iraq

> John Arquilla, codirector of the center on Terrorism and Irregular Warfare
> at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA was quoted as saying
> that the general lack of American culture preparation for the Iraqi
> campaign, including an insufficient number of people with language skills
> to understand even basic information, is one of the causes of failure to
> effectively combat this insurgency.[54]

As illustrated by earlier examples, preparation for the Iraq campaign was

inadequate in terms of cultural and language preparation. More importantly decision

makers in the Department of Defense made flawed assumptions that Iraqi society would

embrace a regime change and placement of U.S. backed leadership. Conflicts between

Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish populations were well known prior to entering Iraq. The added

complexity of Al-Qaeda insurgents was anticipated and even stressed as part of a

greater reason for the invasion. Setting aside any argument on the legitimacy of

invasion, the key point is leadership and planners either missed or were forced to ignore

obvious indicators on Iraqi response and required preparation. Important solutions to

issues such as having competent planners capable of understanding the cultural terrain

in decision making, preparing U.S. forces with the tools and training necessary to

address cultural issues, and rapidly building indigenous forces with appropriate ethnic balance capable of providing essential stability.

The U.S. military has recently learned to appreciate the role of cultural competence in Iraq and Afghanistan by incorporating social scientists into military units. These social anthropologists determine local social connections and facilitate building relationships with U.S. military forces. Some people in academia are concerned with the implications of such work. Previous cooperation with the military in Vietnam and South America is suspected of being used for kinetic purposes. In fact, "the executive board of the American Anthropological Association has released a statement that 'expresses its disapproval' of a year-old U.S. Army program known as the Human Terrain System, which sends anthropologists and other scientists to advise military units in Afghanistan and Iraq."[55] These efforts maybe late in implementation but they appear to be working. In fact the Army intends to spend an additional 40 million dollars on the program.[56] This is an important step in attempting to provide stability in a country roughly the size as California with deep religious separations and a history of extreme violence. The most important point is that the suppressive government in charge of Iraq for over 20 years has controlled information, movement and the political infrastructure. Iraq's, "brutal dictatorships have not allowed the development of the necessary habits and skills required for the art of association."[57] It has programmed the population to behave in a manner which will take time to change. Combined with religious and cultural undertones, the fabric requires experts to interpret and provide counsel on the complex issues in Iraq. Early assistance in the planning phase would enhance success, and involvement in the development of training programs and preparation of armed forces

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working directly with the population would be a major enabler. The latter being an area requiring much improvement.

The training and preparation of forces to serve as mentors for the Iraqi armed forces has been disjointed. Some units serving as Military Transition Teams received only the standard pre-deployment training leaving them to figure out the culture and language.[58] In some cases Iraqi formations are paired with U.S. elements with little preparation or instruction. Marines currently derive training models from their Vietnam experiences, and by adapting current technology and training methods they prepare their officers and noncommissioned officers for advisor and civic action programs in Iraq.[59] It seems logical that some central effort or proponency should exist for managing the wide spectrum of programs needed globally on a reoccurring basis. Expecting an experienced staff officer to periodically dust of old books in an attempt to cobble together a plan from ill captured lessons from the past is inefficient. This lack of preparation affects not only how our troops perform in conflict but how well we work with indigenous armies during stability operations.

Understanding the various militia and security forces is difficult. Our understanding of the armed forces on the ground was slow to develop. Militia organizations who previously operated as insurgents against Saddam Hussein's regime now serve as local security forces. "Some, like the Badr Brigade or peshmerga, have been integrated into the new Iraqi Security Forces."[60] Many areas of Iraq have remnants of local militias which became the core of their respective police force. Often dominated by a single religious or ethnic group, these forces draw skepticism from the local population who is

from another group or faction. Too often these forces use their position of power to serve their own interests.[61]

Building new Iraq security forces have been a challenge. Some of the initial problems with forming Iraqi army units were consistent with those identified in building the ANA. Of the first 700 man battalion fielded in October of 2003, 300 members left the force because of low salaries.[62] Two years later 90 battalions would be fielded though all but one were lightly armed and had minimal equipment, mobility and logistics capability.[63] Steady increases in Iraqi military force took place throughout last year with 95 battalions moving into the eighteen Iraqi provinces and actually assuming control of seven of them.[64] The Multi-National Force - Iraq (MNF-I) states that it will take time to build a professional army as they, "ensure they take into account all the factors involved in producing a professional, high-quality force, built upon the rights of the Iraqi people, and the nation's rich culture and tradition."[65] Recruiting, vetting, training, equipping and fielding a quality army is difficult. Considerations of quality and professionalism must be balanced with the need to put indigenous forces in the front lines of local security as quickly as possible. In fielding local forces the U.S. military becomes less apparent to the public and more likely to reduce friction. Their presence becomes a means of insuring stability for the nation, increasing Iraqi military competence and allowing patterns of success to develop.

Common Thread

The U.S. government has a history of intervention. Over the last hundred plus years they have deployed military forces to remove foreign government, replace hostile regimes or stabilize existing governments favorable to U.S. interests. Common threads

which lead to success or failure can be found in each conflict. While multiple reasons contribute to the great cause it is important to note that cultural understanding in planning, training in deployed forces and the use of indigenous forces is essential to long term success. Through more effective planning the unique constraints and limitations to providing stability can be ascertained and acted upon. It is with this thought in mind that I will discuss considerations in culture.

Culture as a Nexus for Enduring Success

What is Culture?

Culture defines who people are. It is a unique identity which incorporates elements of a shared belief system, traditions, rituals and customs formed by years of historical events, religion, language, environment and possible exposure to other different cultures. It explains not only who people are but, "who people are, where they can be found, what language they speak, what they believe, how they survive in a specific environment, and how they make group decisions." [66] This social structure is an ongoing "arrangement of persons in relationships defined or controlled by institutions" [67] within an established cultural norm with a defined pattern of behavior. The cultural and institutional norms are framed by factors involving religion, geography, language, politics, and economics.

Why is Culture Important?

"Cultural awareness is essential to creating agile and Joint Expeditionary Capable Leaders."[68] Understanding the culture of a region provides insight into how the indigenous population thinks. Though it is not an actual language, cultural awareness

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enhances communication and is critical to both war fighting and follow-on stability operations. In the military context, cultural awareness can be defined as an understanding of the cultural terrain and how it connects with actions throughout the six phases of military operations. Four considerations or themes emerge in reflecting on the use of culture in military operations.

> These four themes include: general consideration of why and how culture is important and how it is applied in context to operational or tactical situations, cultural understanding which provides awareness of motivating factors and how thoughts are formulated, cultural competence which suggests the ability to successfully incorporate cultural elements into military operations, and cultural expertise which allows for the synthesis of a wide spectrum of information into a broader system.[69]

The ability to understand and work with an indigenous population reduces the probability of working against them.

What are Cultural Considerations?

"Culture patterns – religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological-are 'programs'; the provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes." [70] Individual soldiers are often provided with fundamental do's and don'ts for the culture in which they are to be immersed. On the surface it addresses the religious, philosophical and ideological differences. It serves to provide a framework of general conduct but does not provide a why or reason. This may be adequate for the service member on the ground but does little for planners even at the lowest tactical level.

Cultural considerations vary from area-to-area even within the same region or country. The best method for grasping important planning considerations is

communication and feedback. By listening to the people we better understand the culture and what the people see as important. It is this ability to listen which provides clear and rational comprehension of the local authority, commitment to ideals, customs, fears, hopes, motives, values and religious beliefs. It is an endless list that is best developed through interaction, the product of which is the key in developing a cultural intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) in all phases of the operation. It allows us to consider, "the beliefs, perceptions, behavioral patterns, and likely reactions of nearly every group and significant individual in the battle space."[71]

To Whom is Culture Important?

Culture is exceptionally important to all military leaders and planners. It is equally import that our political leadership, governmental departments and interagency partners see the value of assessing culture as part of their decision making process. Political leaders in particular must look at problems and potential solutions through a cultural lens. The approach selected may differ if they assess both the culture and historical probabilities and implications of their choices. "The U.S. has attempted to export Western-style liberal democracy via military occupation numerous times over the past century, but ironically, policymakers have neglected the factors that have sustained these institutions over the long run in their home country." [72] I am not attempting to judge or evaluate the rationale or legitimacy of any military efforts included in this paper. What I am suggesting is that choosing to enter armed conflict in support of any cause should be done with the widest possible understanding of the people in target area and the probable outcomes of such an action. It is a matter of deliberate influence as opposed to random outcomes.

Presently it is important to identify where the focus of our stability and reconstruction efforts should be. The U.S. with limited resources and both domestic and global requirements to satisfy must allocate resources judiciously. "Culture is perhaps the greatest constraint on reconstruction efforts." [73] We make decisions on which project will be completed often based on our own preferences. We utilize vast amounts of finances to repair what the local population allows insurgents to destroy, and build infrastructure which previously did not exist. It is a matter of understanding that culture itself is an institution capable of apply limits to other efforts. "These countries have different endowments of culture – capital and knowledge that constrain the effectiveness of those resources."[74]

The Application of Culture

Culture has predictive value which is not well understood by Americans whose own national history and identity are relatively short in comparison to other societies.[75] This is an important consideration in strategic planning. It suggests that it may be possible for planners to more accurately anticipate potential responses and the level of cooperation which can be expected from indigenous populations during military operations. While an understanding of the population and its social structure helps to assess potential actions, "culture does not determine a precise course of action for individuals or groups but: limits the range of options considered, limits the way those actions and ideas are defined, establishes a narrative structure that provides meaning."[76]

Analysis of the operational environment requires first a broad look at the overall collective culture and what common threads connect the sub cultures if any. These

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common threads as a minimum must remain in order to build a sense of security which is essential to cooperation. As with most populations a primary concern is security. In the absence of order the citizens will look to their own family, faction, community and leadership for protection. "Cultural groups organize for both aggression and protection. Enemies or potential enemies are defined by history and tradition, ideology, and current needs to survive……. We need to know the intent, motive and capabilities of competing cultural groups, in order to better assess the conflict environment."[77]

The ability to assess people in an environment and determine possible outcomes as part of larger planning effort is the most important application of understanding culture. It is not the ability to manipulate the population but rather to find areas of cooperation and develop mutual buy-in from central parties.

Existing Cultural Applications

"At present, staff officers with limited social science skills and minimal access to unbiased information on the subjects they are researching conduct much of this research."[78] Programs with a quick introduction to the national customs, key phrases and do's and don'ts with smart cards have been the most predictable effort for the average soldier. Some deployment briefs like the one I attended at Fort Carson in 2002 included a two hour brief on the Country and culture. It was not specific to the area and neglected to mention the various languages other than Pashto. Training an army selected from the wider Afghan nation meant working with Dari, Tajik and Uzbek speakers. Train-the trainer efforts were also largely ineffective.

The 5th Standard Generic Training Module (SGTM) published for peace keeping by the United Nations provides a thirty slide overview of why culture is helpful and

provides a few considerations which may or may not be relevant. It attempts to address potential points of friction but does not serve to analyze the dynamics of cultural interaction.[79]

The United States Army War College is the pinnacle of education for commissioned officers of the U.S. and their key allies. The course curriculum includes a wide variety of elective courses which provides some insight into the dynamics of culture in military operations. These opportunities and one small block on cultural considerations in strategic leadership provide only enough insight as to understand its importance, but no real means of implementation.[80]

New initiatives seeking to place social scientists and other key academic professionals into advisory roles, seems to be gaining traction. The military's receptiveness to taking advice from anthropologists and growing trust by those in academia could be the beginning of an effective program which meets the needs of the military without damaging the social structure of nations like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mapping a Solution

Understanding the importance of culture in conflict is important. Whether it is the Philippine Archipelago, the jungles of Vietnam and South America, or the arid regions of Iraq and Afghanistan, knowing how to assess, interact and communicate with the people is essential. The ability to identify the existing human landscape and whether their values, knowledge and way of life will support a transition to democracy should be an initial planning consideration. This "endowment serves as a hard constraint on the actions of occupiers. Attempting to transplant a formal institution is not the same thing as transplanting the entire social system that generated that institution."[81] The

fundamental formula for success is not only to understand culture and prepare our own forces but to establish competent host nation forces capable of providing long-term stability for emerging representative governments. With this in mind, I make these recommendations.

Looking to the Future

I am not suggesting that it is possible to eliminate cultural differences or ethical to control and exploit indigenous populations. What I am suggesting is that proper research and knowledge of a culture provides a framework for understanding probable outcomes and the long term effects of military intervention. If such intervention is intent on prompting regime change, strong consideration must be given to the type of government which will emerge. This and the cost of intervention must be weighed against this outcome. Regardless of how well one understands the human landscape, populations will return to and act in accordance with their cultural norm. This does not mean change is impossible. It means the time required or the final product will likely differ from that which is desired.

Evidence from past conflicts, such as the American Revolution, Vietnam, and the war in Iraq, confirms the ethnic, religious, and tribal relationships existing in particular areas have crucial implications on determining how an operation progresses." [82] Such considerations are essential in stabilization and transition to civil authority. The ability to calculate requirements, field a well trained force and establish an indigenous force capable of providing security and support is essential to a newly formed government.

Invest in Cultural Planning and Resources

Numerous institutions spread across the U.S. military are designed and ran by the individual service components, each one establishing proponency within a school house of perceived subject matter experts. Often the funding and availability of useful products or assistance to military leaders and policy makers is difficult.[83]

Difficulty in accessing this knowledge leaves planners to develop their own sources and base decisions on information which is not grounded in detailed research. "Because the officer corps generally lacks skills in anthropological field work, political science, sociology, development economics, and area studies, commanders must muddle through with inadequate---and sometimes wrong---information." [84]

A solution to this problem is to establish a centrally funded Department of Defense cultural center which is resourced to provide support to the leaders, policy makers and planners from all services agencies. Such support includes detailed studies for combatant commands, research on specific regions where instruments of power may influence change or deter aggressive behavior. Efforts would include needs assessments on force structure requirements, and identifying shortcomings in cultural education and training methodologies. It would consolidate requirements for all soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen. A key function would be synchronizing programs and drawing of proven curriculums like those at the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center. Finally the center would provide cultural advisors as a deployable asset when required. "Commanders would benefit from cultural advisors who can identify legitimate leaders and the interests of the population in the area in question; ethno-religious, class, and tribal groups; and help develop courses of action for institution building and economic development, among other things." [85]

This center would conduct research in support of the military but maintain an ethical position on the use of social sciences in support of national objectives. The program would be permanent and require significant funding but would arguably reduce unnecessary expenses in shaping, deterring, seizing the initiative, dominating, stabilizing and enabling civil authority. In addition to developing and storing information, it would act as a mechanism for the transfer of knowledge.

Transfer Knowledge and Prepare the Force

There are many views on what soldiers need in terms of training and how that training should be delivered. Many of these positions have merit and deserve a closer analysis. This analysis however, must be done in terms of education methods as opposed to training programs. In education one imparts knowledge and the concept of how to interact with other cultures. This is more beneficial than simple training programs designed to provide conditioned responses to a short list of potential interactions. A wider effort designed to address the needs of servicemen at all levels is required.

A TRADOC policy letter directed four key considerations in improving cultural training in the army. First was the requirement to address fundamental aspects of Arab culture in training for leaders. Second was to incorporate broad based cultural training into all levels of enlisted, warrant and officer training. Third was to establish a curriculum which would enable mid-level leaders to better operate with coalition partners in reconstruction efforts. Fourth was to provide "leaders with the tools necessary to assess, understand, plan for combined operations in conditions similar to those in Iraq and Afghanistan today."[86] This guidance recognizes the need for incorporating cultural education into essentially all army curriculums. It does not however provide adequate

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guidance for implementation and many of these institutions lack the requisite knowledge to design or execute effective programs.

The type of program needed to properly prepare soldiers for deployment would best be developed by skilled educators with the requisite content identified by social science professionals. This would originate in the cultural center discussed earlier. The course could include some elements of small group instruction, practical exercises and a potential web based scenarios. The potential is limitless, including such initiatives as the one at the National Training Center, in Fort Irwin, CA. Soldiers gain experience by interacting with Iraq-Americans in mock villages. The program must be specific to the targeted audience, effective, applicable, consistent and of high quality.

Quickly Field a Professional Indigenous Force

In conflicts like Vietnam and Iraq, local militia performed better when fighting next to U. S. forces. "Knowing they have the resources and experience of the U. S. Army right behind them, in a battalion they share space with, instills better morale, confidence, and discipline in newly organized forces.[87]"

Historically the mission of training indigenous forces has been left to the Special Forces. With the best training and years of experience conducting joint exercises for training and participation in unconventional warfare or foreign internal defense missions, the training and skill set for special forces operational detachments is the best possible for training foreign forces. "But when the operational scale jumps from providing support to a host country to rebuilding a host nation's entire military, the conventional Army must get involved."[88] If we are to be successful in establishing a well trained indigenous force, a quick decision as to the scale and resources required must be done more quickly. The

sooner host nation forces are in place, the sooner large amounts of U.S. and coalition forces can withdraw. Host nation arms must be considered bilateral or coalition partners in securing their own future.

Training foreign armies should be considered an essential part of coalition warfare. As with other coalition partners, indigenous armies bring unique strengths and capabilities into the partnership. Where a large number of forces are required, conventional forces must assist. These are not advisory missions but standard training missions designed to provide fundamental military training by and for conventional forces. "A mobile training team goes to a unit, trains it, and then departs. A unit may come to a training site, undergo the training, and then it departs. Unconventional training operations may in fact blend the training with an advisory role in some cases with a command role."[89]

Continued presence in either an advisory role would be preferred. Such mentorship provides a sense of security these units. It also continues the mentoring relationship that is the foundation for maintaining proper conduct and discipline within the organization. Where possible the indigenous face within a community is best. It puts the bulk of responsibility for stability on the host nation force. This supports transition goals. In areas were host nation forces cannot maintain security, conventional U.S. or coalition forces must be present to support them. This is particularly true in counter insurgencies. "The combined arms maneuver battalion, partnering with indigenous security forces living among the population it secures, should be the basic tactical unit of counterinsurgency (COIN) warfare."[90] In all circumstances, host nation forces must

not be allowed to fail during combat operations. Continued competence and confidence must be developed.

A citizen's confidence in their armed forces is essential. The host nation forces must be seen as effective and capable of providing stability. Populations in or emerging from conflict are concerned with security. Ties to familiar surroundings, family and tribal units are expected. "People under change conditions both want to cling to the comfortable, traditional past, and react to the change in a way that is positive and will ensure their own survival."[91] It is important to develop legitimacy in indigenous forces. This means tapping into the authority of local community and tribal leaders. Support of local leaders provides support and adds another key capability to stability operations. "Indigenous troops act as de facto covert information collectors and subject-matter experts on local culture. Hey also are able to undertake sensitive site exploitation, like mosque raids, and act as a bridge between the counterinsurgent force and the community even as they set the conditions for an eventual exit strategy."[92]

In all cases it is important to remember that sustained change time and the result will not be a product that is "Made in America." In working with host nation forces, we build trust and increase our own competencies in cultural. We can infuse tactical and technical competencies but we cannot supplant traditional values. We can train provide the skills needed to promote local security as we advance U.S. interests.

> But it cannot transform a society according to preconceived blueprints. Refusal to understand and accept the limits of influence only ensures that the final result of creating military and police institutions in another culture will deviate from the original goals envisioned for such forces.[93]

Transition

Trust is the essential element in securing the confidence of the population. It is this trust that must be considered in planning for, and executing military operations. We must establish objectives that are congruent with the societal norms and values.

> If the local populace does not believe that the United States has their best interests in mind, operational successes will be hampered. Regardless of the operation's purpose, the local populace needs to be assured and reassured that the United States will stick with it until the end.[94]

Conclusion

Gaining support of the civilian population is crucial to success on the battlefield. Cooperation is a result of perceived security and the belief that it is in ones best interests. "The regard for one's own benefit or advantage is the basis for behavior in all societies, regardless of religion, class, or culture."[95] In stability operations the ability to understand a society and its behavior is paramount. A commitment to understanding and investing in cultural knowledge is essential. We can no longer "assume that the wisdom inherent in our way of doing things will be recognized and accepted if not acclaimed."[96] By establishing a state of the art center for anthropological studies we can develop an understanding of societies in regions around the world. This competency will become a key enabler for civilian and military leaders by providing information which will help decision makers better ascertain the probable outcomes in the application of the instruments of power. It will also serve to better prepare our own forces for operations and the effective training and transition of authority to host nation governments and their supporting armies.

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