

**IMPROVING CULTURAL
AWARENESS IN THE U.S.
MILITARY**

BY

**COLONEL HERSHEL L. HOLIDAY
United States Army**

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

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

Colonel Hershel L. Holiday
United States Army

Colonel William J. Flavin
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

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Congressional and military leaders have directed improvement in cultural awareness training throughout the Department of Defense. However there are severe challenges, especially in an era of limited resources, transformation and combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Research shows that cultural decisions may not always achieve their desired effect; many bad decisions are a result of cultural ignorance. There are several ways to improve cultural awareness in the military using military personnel, civilian experts, or a combination of both. However, there are challenges. For example, cultural experts suggest that the use of civilian anthropologists might achieve the desired effect, yet anthropologists must overcome a history of mistrust and disillusionment with the military that might hinder participation. The Army, for example, has directed cultural awareness studies at several military schools and courses, to include the Army War College. However this will require significant resources. Whatever the method, perhaps the most we can accomplish is to develop a basic knowledge of foreign cultures so that planners and decision makers will understand and consider religious, tribal, or family interactions within foreign societies.

Greater awareness a society's or adversary's culture might prevent or mitigate the length and cost of current and future conflicts.

IMPROVING CULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE U.S. MILITARY

It is hard to imagine the U.S. engaged in its second counterinsurgency (COIN) operation in less than 30 years. It seems improbable that after the hard lessons of Vietnam that any western nation would find itself in a seemingly endless conflict in a foreign environment. Part of the reason why the Army has found itself less than ready for this war goes back to the Army's unwillingness to internalize the lessons of Vietnam.¹ Former Army Vice Chief of Staff, General Jack Keane, recently stated that the Army has no doctrine, education or training to deal with an insurgency. He went on to say that after Vietnam, the Army purged everything that had to do with irregular warfare or insurgency because it was related to a war that we lost; which, in hindsight, was a bad decision.² Yet, here we are; facing similar circumstances in Afghanistan and Iraq. Some of the most knowledgeable scholars, military and civilian, are searching for methods to resolve these conflicts; however there are no clear solutions yet. Meanwhile the war continues with great costs measured in killed and wounded servicemen and women, costs to the tax payer, growing disillusionment at home and a declining U.S. reputation abroad.

One of several attempts to reach a successful end to these conflicts is to improve cultural awareness throughout the Department of Defense (DoD). If successful, this initiative will assist decision makers at all levels to make timely and more accurate decisions, perhaps sparing lives and other valuable resources. On the premise that future wars will likely involve full spectrum operations followed by complex and lengthy COIN operations, this paper analyzes how improvements in cultural awareness might help to resolve such conflicts. It will analyze the results of previous culture-based

decisions and question the utility and accuracy of such decisions. It will also analyze the use of cultural experts versus military personnel to work in these complex areas. Finally, this paper will evaluate recent DoD and Army strategies to improve language and cultural capabilities.

The Definition of Culture

According to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps COIN Manual, Culture is a “web of meaning” shared by members of a particular society or group within a society. Culture is therefore;

- A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another.
- Learned, through a process called enculturation.
- Shared by members of a society; there is no “culture of one”.
- Patterned, meaning that people in a society live and think in ways forming definite, repeating patterns.
- Changeable, through social interactions between people and groups.
- Arbitrary, meaning that Soldiers and Marines should make no assumptions regarding what a society considers right and wrong, good and bad.
- Internalized, in the sense that it is habitual, taken for granted, and perceived as “natural” by people within the society.³

Culture might also be described as an “operational code” that is valid for an entire group of people. Culture conditions the individual’s range of action and ideas, including what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and whom to do it with or not to do it with. Culture also includes under what circumstances the “rules” shift and change. Perhaps

most importantly, culture influences how people make judgments about what is right and wrong, assesses what is important and unimportant, categorizes things, and deals with things that do not fit into existing categories.⁴ This definition outlines the complex challenges of using culture to predict adversary actions and decisions, especially in military operations. This textbook definition provides a basic understanding of the term; however, to achieve military success, DoD must also consider the realities of racial and ethnic groups, stereotypes and tensions within these cultures. With regard to these challenges, the U.S. Military must invest the time and effort to ensure that all military operations are planned, prepared for, and executed based on a knowledge of those involved, both friend and foe.

Current and Historical Challenges with Cultural Assertions

There are tremendous pitfalls when considering culture as an organizing concept or an operational system in military decision making.⁵ There are multiple exceptions and qualifications to consider, especially when using culture to predict the military actions of various nations or nation-states. Throughout history, there have been many cultural miscues, world wide and within the U.S., regarding military operations. Patrick Porter, in *Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War*, suggests caution when applying cultural stereotypes against sound military planning. There are too many exceptions and qualifications that must be made between the eastern and western ways of war.⁶ He further argues that there are moments when cultures do not control states, but where states control cultures. The differences in how nation-states approach war are dictated less by cultural traditions and more by the hard realities of power, weakness and pragmatism.⁷ Porter says that most western nations follow the

Clausewitzian approach to warfare marked by large scale, conventional operations, without daily interference from political leaders. In contrast, the U.S. fought much differently in Vietnam. There was frequent interaction with civilian leaders who applied significant limits and controls at the operational and tactical levels. Likewise, the North Vietnamese, following Mao's indirect approach--using intelligence, deception and avoiding heavy casualties—actually endured over a million casualties but achieved strategic success.⁸

In another example, Porter shows how a pragmatic approach solved a very difficult military challenge. During the Gallipoli campaign of 1915, when the British and French empires tried and failed to storm the Dardanelles Straits against the Ottoman Turks, the Turks used a series of deceptive ambushes to defeat this attack. Though the Turkish Infantry were advised by the German Army, these actions were common military tactics to armies in Asia Minor.⁹ However, Porter suggests that the most striking display of deception, and counter culture, was carried out by the British four months later when they executed a flawless retreat of eighty thousand men, with vehicles, weapons and animals.¹⁰ This move perhaps stunned the Turks who likely expected the British and French to hold, reinforce, and re-attack.

Porter's study provides examples where military decisions were made based on sound judgment apart from cultural stereotypes. Overall, his article serves as a warning to the U.S. military. As DoD shifts some of its resources from "technology overmatch" to cultural awareness, planners and decision makers must remember that there are no simple or instant solutions to current or future wars. Though Porter supports the need for greater cultural awareness, he advises DoD to "proceed with caution".

The United States Government (USG) has also made a series of complex military decisions based solely on race and ethnic culture. Though there were associated struggles in the areas of economics, property or political power that affected each of these decisions, the issues of culture, in terms of race or ethnic groups, were the most prominent. From a brief analysis of a few key instances, it seems that the more we know about a targeted culture, the better the quality of our decisions. The opposite is also true: A cursory knowledge of a specific race or culture leads to culturally awkward decisions with grave repercussions. To illustrate this challenge, the following analyzes culturally-based military or national defense decisions. At least one example shows a positive result. However, those that were negative generated great pain, injustice and, in the worse case, needless battlefield casualties.

A successful culturally-based decision was the use of Navajo “code talkers” during World War II. Navajo code talkers took part in every Marine assault in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. The idea to use the Navajo language for secure communication came from Philip Johnston, the son of a missionary to the Navajos and one of the few non-Navajos who spoke the language fluently. Johnston, reared on a Navajo reservation, was a World War I veteran who knew of the military’s search for an unbreakable code. He also knew that Native American languages—notably Choctaw—had been used in WWI to encode messages. The Navajo language, as a code, was undecipherable; it is not a written language, it has no alphabet or symbols, and is extremely complex. Its syntax and tonal qualities, not to mention dialects, make it unintelligible to anyone without extensive exposure and training. One estimate is that less than 30 non-Navajos,

none of them Japanese, could understand the language at the outbreak of World War II.¹¹ The Japanese, who were skilled code breakers, never broke this code.

However, there were other cases where U.S. decision-making showed little depth and understanding of the targeted culture. The decision to incarcerate people of Japanese ancestry during WWII was made out of admitted cultural ignorance. Seventy-four days after the Japanese government's devastating attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on 19 February 1942, which became the authority for the U.S. Army to exile nearly 120,000 persons of Japanese birth or ancestry from their homes in California, Oregon, Washington and other West Coast areas, placing them in concentration camps for the duration of the War. At the time, Congress implemented this act without a dissenting vote in the name of military necessity, and it was applauded by the vast majority of Americans.¹² Almost 50 years later, on 10 August 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. This Act provided an unprecedented apology to the survivors of this wartime incarceration and authorized the payment of twenty thousand dollars to each of them. The Presidential Commission judged that Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity, and the decisions which followed from it were likewise unfounded. The Commission went on say that widespread historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership. They concluded that widespread ignorance of Japanese Americans contributed to a policy conceived in haste and executed in an atmosphere of fear and anger at Japan.¹³

Another incident occurred in the late 1800s regarding the recruitment of a particular cultural or ethnic group based on rumored capabilities. While preparing for the Spanish America War, Congress, under political pressure to create units considered immune to possible Caribbean diseases, authorized the creation of ten new regiments of so called "immunes". Four of these regiments would be composed of African American soldiers.¹⁴ Though there was gallant fighting mixed with occasional racial challenges during this war, the assumption that American Blacks were uniquely immune to tropical diseases proved false. For example, the 24th Infantry Division received orders to provide work details for the military hospital at Siboney, Cuba but roughly 50 percent of the 471 officers and men of the unit who reported for this duty contracted the disease.¹⁵

Finally, regarding cultural miscues, the WWII design of the 92nd Infantry Division reveals a blatant miscalculation of culture in choosing the division's leadership. The 92nd ID was primarily an African American Division, however, with Caucasian leadership basically from the rank of Captain to Commanding General. The division averaged seven hundred white and three hundred colored officers (mostly second and first lieutenants with a few captains).¹⁶ In a recent speech, Rick Atkinson, noted journalist, historian and author, remarked that the decision to place white, southern officers in command positions over the all black 92nd ID soldiers was the primary challenge to the unit as it trained and deployed for combat in Italy.¹⁷ There were other problems within the 92nd. For example, training was halted for two months to allow time to teach some of the men to read, since illiteracy in the division exceeded 60 percent.¹⁸ White officers from the 92nd attributed the division's poor battlefield record to a lack of intelligence and

motivation among the colored troops. However, historian Ulysses Lee suggests that the cause was a simple lack of trust—the command’s trust in their troops, the troops’ trust in their command and both toward each other. Because of this, Lee contends that it was not long before neither the officers nor the troops expected a given task to be accomplished—or that it was even worth attempting in the first place.¹⁹

As a result of negative reports by WWI commanders, Negro troops, during the interwar years, were severely restricted and relegated to support (Quartermaster, Supply, Transportation, etc.) versus combat duties at the beginning of WWII. However, responding to pressures from various groups to include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Roosevelt administration directed an expanded combat role for Negro troops. As a result the Army would activate four divisions manned by colored draftees and recruits.

Army leaders had good intentions in choosing white Southerners to lead the 92nd; however this action proved disastrous for the unit. Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshal and the Army’s senior leaders decided that the best officers to lead this unit were Southerners, as they had more frequent contact with Negroes than officers from other parts of the country, and they believed better understood how to deal with them.²⁰ The choice of southern leadership led to instant morale problems combined with training “green soldiers”. These challenges proved overwhelming as the 92nd would face some of the toughest German units during the Italian Campaign. A black veteran later described the command climate as “an intangible, elusive undercurrent of resentment,

bitterness, even despair and hopelessness among black officers and enlisted men in the division".²¹

This command climate, in some measure could be attributed to Major General Almond, considered an overbearing Virginian who would oppose integration of the armed forces until his dying day in 1975. In a secret document from the war, Almond asserted that "black officers lacked pride, aggressiveness and a sense of responsibility".²² It was clear that Almond and his staff were not the right choice to lead the 92nd, but the times and beliefs of the era superseded rational thought and the soldiers of the 92nd would suffer the consequences.

Prior to their departure for combat operations in Italy, the Army's first and only WWII active duty African American General Officer, Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, lead an investigation team to review complaints of racism and morale challenges in the 92nd. Davis discovered the problems stemmed from unfair promotion and assignment policies. Although Davis praised Almond as being "diligent and conscientious" in training the division, he criticized Almond's failure to recognize and address morale problems among Negro troops. He also noted that this failure was directly attributed to the Army's policy of assigning mostly Southern officers to Negro units. In conclusion, Davis noted that being from the South did not make an officer an expert in handling Negroes "merely by accident of birth".²³

In summary, this section illustrates the difficulties associated with making military or national defense decisions based upon culture. However the larger issue is how do we distinguish cultural myths from cultural facts? In each case, key decision makers were convinced that their view of the world was correct which was most likely based on

stereotyping, racial or ethnic biases. However, there are always multiple reasons for any oppressive decision: money, political power, property and other prizes will always be subcomponents of such decisions. Based on this analysis, these decisions were made based more on culture than on any other circumstance. Initial research shows that sufficient knowledge of a target culture, as with the Navajos, generally equates to higher quality decisions regarding the specified group.

Elements Demanding Increased Cultural Awareness

There are two basic reasons why DoD has increased its interest in cultural awareness. First and as previously discussed, key leaders believe that DoD's heavy investment in advanced technology cannot, by itself, achieve stability in Iraq and Afghanistan. The counterinsurgent phases of these operations have proven more difficult than earlier, more conventional actions. For example, a common argument is that if military planners had known more about cultural norms, more about the Bath Party, the tribal and cultural linkages within the Army and Police, and what was tolerable to the Iraqi people, the U.S. Military and Coalition Forces, might have achieved a successful conclusion by now; which leads to the second reason—we have been directed to change.

From the highest levels of our government, senior military and elected officials have acknowledged and identified that DoD must alter its ways of doing business in Iraq in order to achieve success. On 21 October 2003, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held a hearing to examine the lessons learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Retired Army Major General (MG) Robert H. Scales, former Commander of the U.S. Army War College, discussed the need for better cultural

awareness within the military. His premise was that if we had better understood Iraqi culture and mind set, our war plans and post war reconstruction would have been better.²⁴ Representative Ike Skelton also noted that of the hundreds of languages and dialects spoken around the world, American high school and university programs only concentrate on a dozen, mostly European languages. In the military, only a select few service men and women have the opportunity to receive intense language and cultural training. As a result of this hearing, Skelton directed the Secretary of Defense to make cultural awareness training a priority for both military and civilian Defense Department personnel with additions in the curricula at staff and war colleges, as the current structure for cultural awareness was considered inadequate compared to the challenges of today and the future.

The Foreign Area Officers (FAO) program, a long standing Functional Area (FA), was designed to provide officers a combination of regional expertise, political-military awareness, and language qualification to act as a cross-cultural linkage within foreign and U.S. political and military organizations. Because few FAOs are ever subjected to deep cultural emersions totally outside the military structure, most do not develop real cultural and social expertise. Furthermore, most do not work as cultural advisers to commanders on the ground but serve as military attachés, security assistance officers, or instructors.²⁵

In addition, MG Scales wrote in the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* that "the military remains wedded to the premise that success in war is best achieved by overwhelming technological advantage".²⁶ Scales argues that a great advantage can be achieved by out-thinking rather than out-equipping the enemy. He further states that the

type of conflict we are now witnessing in Iraq requires “an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation”.²⁷

This shift in concern for cultural awareness represents a significant change in how the United States Government (USG) approaches warfare. After spending the decade of the nineties achieving technological overmatch, DoD must now consider that success in current and future wars will require greater knowledge of why people do what they do and how they make decisions. But how do we address this problem?

There are many possible solutions to increase cultural awareness in the military. The challenge is, however, whether or not DoD should use military or civilian personnel or a combination of both? Currently DoD is testing several concepts using both military and civilian cultural experts. However current debate, along with resource and sustainment challenges, suggests there is no “approved solution”.

Global Scouts

Changing our current paradigms will require bold new thoughts and ideas. For example, MG Scales proposes creating a corps of “global scouts” as part of Army intelligence transformation.²⁸ Scales says that the heart of a culture-centric approach to future war should be a cadre of global scouts, well educated, with a penchant for languages and a comfort with strange and distant places. He further states that these soldiers should receive the time to fully emerge into a single culture and to establish trust within that particular tribe or ethnic group.²⁹ Further, the means for creating and sustaining these global scouts could derive from a sponsorship program in which the services would fund officer and noncommissioned officers to spend long periods in foreign countries, attending foreign staff colleges, and remain with their assigned

countries perhaps for decades, with no harm to career progression. To sustain this approach, services would be permitted to add to their end strengths with additional funding to allow participation without jeopardizing other, conventional programs.³⁰

Without prescribing a proposed size of such an organization, Scales says that global scouts should be supported and reinforced by a body of intellectual fellow travelers within the intelligence community who are formally educated in the deductive and inductive skills to understand and interpret the information and insights provided by scouts in the field. These analysts should attend graduate school, studying human behavior and cultural anthropology. In addition, officers from other government agencies, that routinely ally themselves with the military and perform essential functions in this new era of warfare, should be required to attend military schools specifically designed to improve the interagency function in war. Students and faculty would come from all government agencies, to include the departments of State, Treasury, Homeland Security, and Agriculture, as well as the permanent staffs from the White House and Congress. Military attendees would include professionals from foreign area, civil and public affairs, Special Forces and information operations specialties. These schools would be of such quality and intellectual integrity that they would attract attendees from media along with domestic and international non-governmental organizations, such as the Red Cross and Doctors without Borders.³¹ MG Scales' proposal seems appropriate; however with increasing costs in transforming the Army and fighting current conflicts, this proposal would be difficult to resource, especially in the short run. Another approach to this challenge is to incorporate civilian anthropologists.

Employing Professional Anthropologists

The noted cultural anthropologist and defense policy fellow at the Office of Naval Research, Dr. Montgomery McFate, brings several observations and field experiences to the debate on DoD's task to improve cultural awareness. McFate's arguments are consistent with the common trend of cultural awareness. She argues that the only way to achieve success in Iraq is through understanding the various cultures and subcultures in the region. She states that the insurgents' organizational structure is not military, but tribal. Their tactics are not conventional, but asymmetric. Their weapons are improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with no apparent limits or rules of engagement. The enemy also uses strategic communication and information operations without impunity. She concludes that countering the insurgency in Iraq will require cultural and social knowledge of the adversary; however, none of the elements of national power—diplomatic, military, information, and economic—have explicitly taken adversary culture into account.³²

McFate suggests that DoD should resurrect the role of the anthropologist to achieve these shortcomings. At certain levels, DoD has incorporated these capabilities, however there are many challenges to making this an official policy. McFate cites two reasons why the military has not focused on the cultural awareness of its adversaries: First, the current irrelevance of anthropology in today's society and, second, the pre-stated U.S. failure to recognize cultural lessons from the war in Vietnam.³³

First, anthropology is largely absent as a discipline within our national-security enterprise, especially within the intelligence community and DoD. Anthropology is a social science discipline whose primary object of study has traditionally been non-Western, tribal societies. The methodologies of anthropology include participant

observation, fieldwork, and historical research.³⁴ The central goal of anthropology is cultural relativism—understanding other societies from within their own framework.³⁵

The primary task of anthropology has historically been translating knowledge gained in the “field” back to the West. Though it might seem obvious that such a perspective would be beneficial to national security, only one senior service college currently has an anthropologist on its faculty. At West Point, which traditionally places a heavy emphasis on engineering, anthropology is disparagingly referred to by cadets as “nuts and huts”.³⁶

Dr. McFate also blames U.S. military strategy for failing to employ the resident capabilities of anthropology in U.S. warfighting doctrine. McFate argues that the Powell-Weinberger doctrine institutionalized a preference for “major combat operations” as a national preference with strict avoidance of “another Vietnam”. The Secretary of Defense, Casper Weinberger, believed that U.S. troops should be committed only in support of clearly defined political and military objectives, and only with the “clear intention of winning”.³⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, (and former assistant to Weinberger) Colin Powell, rearticulated the Weinberger doctrine’s fundamental elements, placing a strong emphasis on the idea that force, when used, should be overwhelming and disproportionate to the force used by the enemy. Hence, there is no doctrine for “nation building”, which the military considers a responsibility of the interagency because it is not covered by Title 10 of the U.S. Code which outlines military responsibilities.³⁸

Challenges to Employing Professional Anthropologists

However, there are significant challenges to employing civilian anthropologists. These issues refer to reliability and dependability; issues that are not encountered when using the military. Montgomery McFate presents the following challenges associated with employing civilian cultural experts in support of military operations. Over the years, anthropology has become a self-contained profession with few notable positions outside of academia. Although anthropology is the only academic discipline that explicitly seeks to understand foreign cultures and societies, it is a marginal contributor to U.S. national-security policy at best and a “punch line” at worst. Unlike political science or economics, anthropology is primarily an academic discipline. The majority of newly minted anthropologists brutally compete for a limited number of underpaid university faculty appointments, and although there is an increasing demand from industry for applied anthropologists to advise on product design, marketing, and organizational culture, anthropologists still prefer to study the “exotic and useless”.³⁹

Anthropology has also struggled to disassociate itself with early colonialism, imperialism, and mercantilism; however there is possibly an opportunity for a fresh new start by assisting the Department of Defense. A major criticism against anthropologists is that they were misused as intelligence collectors in previous wars. Through working under cover as “scientists”, anthropologists were able to uncover specific details of military significance which were later used for military gain. Anthropologists thoroughly reject such strategies.⁴⁰

For example, while investigating the possibility of German submarine bases in Central America, Sylvanus Morley, a Harvard-trained archaeologist, who had worked uncovering ancient civilizations in this area, received heavy criticism from fellow

anthropologists for his intelligence assistance during WWI. In 1916, when German agents were allegedly attempting to establish a Central American submarine base, the Office of Naval Intelligence recruited Morley who used archeological fieldwork as a cover to traverse 2,000 miles of remote Central American coastline. He found no bases, however Morley was heavily criticized by members of his profession for having “prostituted science” by using it as a cover for spy activity.⁴¹ A soldier whose business is murder as a fine art...accept [s] the code of morality to which modern society still conforms. Not so the scientist. The very essence of his life is the service of truth.⁴² This criticism of Morley and the resulting scuffle within the American Anthropological Association (AAA) foreshadowed the reemergence of anthropology in support of the U.S. Government leading into the Vietnam War.⁴³

During the Vietnam War, the military preference for overwhelming force frequently trumped the hearts and minds aspect of counterinsurgency. Anthropologists such as Gerald Hickey, who went to Vietnam as a University of Chicago graduate student and remained throughout the war as a researcher for the RAND Corporation, found that cultural knowledge of the Vietnamese was frequently ignored by U.S. military leaders who increasingly adopted a more conventional-war approach as the conflict progressed.⁴⁴

As the war went on, Hickey grew frustrated with the military strategy that attrition warfare would eventually defeat the Communists. Hickey’s view was that war in Vietnam was a political struggle that would only be resolved in political terms, not through pure military force. As an anthropologist, he recognized that elements of Vietnam’s own culture could be used to promote peace between the existing nationalist

political parties, religious groups, and minorities—none of whom welcomed Communist rule. These conclusions were considered “heresy” and reflected the free thinking, honest criticism expected from anthropologists, which was not acceptable by the military hierarchy.⁴⁵

Although the discipline’s roots are deeply entwined with the military, few anthropologists are interested in national security. Their suspicion of military activity stems from a question of ethics: if professional anthropologists are morally obliged to protect those they study, does their cooperation with military intelligence operations violate this prime directive? They believe it does. This conclusion was based on a number of defense projects that sought to use anthropological tools in potentially harmful ways. For example, in 1964 the Army launched Project Camelot, a multinational social science research project, to predict and influence politically significant aspects of social change that would either stabilize or destabilize developing countries. The effort was canceled in July 1965 after international protests erupted in target countries. Critics called Camelot an egregious case of “sociological snooping”.⁴⁶

Human Terrain System (HTS)

Another concept for achieving better, more accurate culture-based decisions in the field is the evolving Human Terrain System.⁴⁷ This option combines the best of both military and civilian cultural experts designed to assist in planning and executing reconstruction operations in post-conflict environments. HTS includes a number of components which include:

- Human Terrain Teams (HTT)—composed of social scientists, military personnel, and cultural analysts, who function as part of a military staff.

- Research Reachback Cell (RRC)—provides analytical and research support to the forward teams.
- Subject Matter Expert Network (SMEnet)—composed of knowledgeable subject matter experts who provide more in-depth research on request.⁴⁸

HTTs seek to integrate and apply social-cultural knowledge of the indigenous population to military operations in support of the Commander's objectives. Currently, DoD is assessing HTT performance to determine whether it should transition to a DoD Program of Record. However there are challenges with this concept.

The initial assessment of HTS was very positive; specifically, the assessment showed that HTTs contributed to an overall reduction in kinetic or “force on force” operations.⁴⁹ Though successful, these results reflect the experiences of only one brigade combat team (BCT) operating in Afghanistan. To build and sustain this capability over time, every BCT operating in Iraq and Afghanistan would require a significant commitment in military and civilian personnel. Though this might be the best solution to provide cultural awareness at the tactical level, more testing and assessment is necessary to determine if DoD can build and sustain this capability for use in Afghanistan, Iraq and other post-conflict areas.

DoD has taken on the task of increasing cultural awareness in the U.S. Military. However the question remains “what is the best strategy”? Professional anthropologists have the training and are quite capable; however their moral and ethical codes might hinder full participation and commitment over time. Likewise, a military solution, such as “global scouts” would be costly and require more time to develop and resources to sustain, which are both limited due to current operations. And, as discussed above, the

HTS concept is far from proven and would also require significant resources, both civilian and military. However, DoD has moved ahead with a strategy to integrate language and cultural training within current schools and training programs. So far DoD has received no additional funding to support these programs; therefore resources will likely shift from other programs. However, will these proposed solutions improve assessed weaknesses in cultural awareness within the military?

Evaluation of Current and Future DoD Strategies

In February 2005, DoD issued the Defense Language Roadmap designed to guide the military's task to improve language and cultural awareness. It provided initial guidance and a host of directives. The charter for DoD was to significantly improve organic capability in emerging languages and dialects, develop a greater competence and regional area skills in those languages and dialects, and build a surge capability to rapidly expand its language capabilities on short notice.⁵⁰ This document was written based on the assumptions that robust foreign language and foreign area expertise are critical to sustaining coalitions, pursuing regional stability, and conducting multi-national missions especially in post-conflict and other than combat security, humanitarian, nation-building, and stability operations. In addition, it was assumed that a more expeditionary force will increase requirements for language and regional knowledge to work with new coalition partners in a wide variety of activities, often with little or no notice. Finally, this document stated that the 21st century strategic environment would require forces proficient in foreign languages beyond that resident in the current force.⁵¹

The Defense Language Roadmap presented a complete set of plans, goals, actions and endstates. However this roadmap provided no additional resources to reach these goals. The Language Roadmap goals include:⁵²

- Create Foundational Language and Regional Area Expertise.
- Establish a Language Office within the Under Secretary of Defense (USD).
- Revise the Defense Language Program Directive.
- Require COCOMs to identify linguistic and translator requirements as part of their contingency and deliberate planning processes for operations plans.
- Build a capabilities-based language requirement determination process.
- Publish an annual “strategic language list”.
- Develop and maintain a language readiness index.
- Conduct a one-time self-report screening of all military and civilian personnel for language skills.

These and other goals or endstates provide the foundation for a complete language and cultural awareness plan, however there must be sufficient funding and robust execution which is essential to achieve these goals.

DoD’s initial response to Roadmap requirements was incorporated in the *DoD Directive 3005.05: Military Support to Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. This document mandates increased language and cultural training throughout DoD.⁵³ At the operational and tactical levels, the Army G-3/5/7 has established a dedicated division to manage stability operations. DoD 3000.05 states that all Services have expanded their training, education, and leader development

policies to enhance language skills, regional knowledge, and understanding of foreign cultures.⁵⁴

The Army G-3/5/7 is implementing 25 approved initiatives and has developed the Army's Stability Operations Action Plan. Finally, the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has established a new Culture Center which provides exportable training materials and mobile training teams to assist units preparing to deploy and operate among foreign cultures. In addition, the United States Marine Corps has been designated the DoD Center of Excellence for Cultural Education. At the "tactical" or user level, the Army Intermediate Level Education (ILE) (for senior Captains and junior Majors) provides over 200 hours of COIN instruction in SSTR as well as over 40 hours of SSTR-related electives with 24 additional hours of mandatory regional study and an additional culture and military operations seminar.⁵⁵ The U.S. Army War College has implemented a mandatory 30-hour regional studies course, a 12-hour Middle East Symposium, and a series of 30 hour electives covering cultural and regional issues. The Army also promises increased opportunities for cultural immersion programs at the U.S. Military Academy with continued opportunities for advanced civil schooling in foreign language, area studies and anthropology.⁵⁶

This new initiative appears to provide a robust program to address cultural differences and communication. Challenges will include a genuine long-term commitment in personnel and funding. If the Afghan and Iraqi Wars ended today, would these initiatives survive? Further, DoD 3000.05 does not provide a clear endstate or measures of effectiveness. How many officers, soldiers, or Army civilians will become proficient in what languages and cultures? Organizations, such as TRADOC, continue

to develop solutions to these issues; however it is too soon to evaluate or measure success.

Conclusion

The study of culture within societies has become more important since DoD began military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a nation and a military force, we may never know or completely understand how our adversaries process information and make decisions. We only know that we must improve our ability to understand what and how they think. Members of Congress and senior military leaders suggest an increase in cultural awareness might improve military performance and lead to more successful operations. There are ways to address this problem; however any solution will require the resources of time, money and personnel, all of which are limited due to the current operations. Perhaps the most we can accomplish is to develop a basic knowledge of foreign cultures so that planners and executors will understand religious, tribal, or family connections within foreign societies. With this knowledge and insight, the U.S. might reduce the impact or totally eliminate the need to fight in the next conflict. There will always be a measure of uncertainty in policy decisions; however we cannot afford to overlook the value of improving cultural awareness. Otherwise, we will have great difficulty competing in the complex and uncertain battlefields of the future.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Department of the Army, and U.S. Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Field Manual No. 3-24/U.S. Marine Corps War Fighting Publication No. 3-33.5 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army and U.S. Marine Corps, December 2006), xiii.

² Ibid., xiv.

³ Ibid., 89-90.

⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁵ This is reference to the six Joint Operating Systems which are: Maneuver, Fire and Effects, Logistics, ADD THE REST OF THESE. I argue that “culture” might become a seventh operating system pending future operations involving stability and transition/reconstruction operations.

⁶ Patrick Porter, “Good Anthropology, Bad History: The Cultural Turn in Studying War,” *Parameters* 40 (Summer 2007): 45 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 18 October 2007.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Alexander Molnar Jr., “Navajo Code Talkers: World War II Fact Sheet,” *Navy & Marine Corps WWII Commemorative Committee*, August 1997 [journal online]; available from <http://www.history.navy.mil/faq61-2.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 December 2007.

¹² In this example, I suggest racial hatred, economic competition and perhaps other variables led to Japanese incarceration during WWII. However, I suggest that all such decisions; restrictions against African and Irish Americans, Indian Wars, and others have also included economic gains and losses. However in this case, the official pardon only mentioned the military purpose for their incarceration; which was never proven.

¹³ Roger Daniels, “Incarcerating Japanese Americans,” *Magazine of History* 16 (Spring 2002); 19 [database on-line], available from ProQuest; accessed 3 December 2007.

¹⁴ Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 66.

¹⁵ David A. Trask, *The War with Spain 1898* (New York: Macmillan, 1981), 311,326.

¹⁶ Interview with Recollections and Reflections: Transcripts of the Debriefing of Gen. Edward M. Almond by Capt. Thomas G. Fergusson, 25 March 1975, Edward M. Almond Papers, Achieves, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., III-40. quoted in Dale E. Wilson, “Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S. 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II,” *The Journal of Military History* 56 (July 1992): 479.

¹⁷ Rick Atkinson addressed the U.S. Army War College presenting excerpts from his new book, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944*, on 29 November 2007.

¹⁸ Rick Atkinson, *The Day of Battle: the War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 383.

¹⁹ Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops in World War II* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1966) quoted in Dale E. Wilson, "Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S. 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 56 (July 1992): 486.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 475.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Atkinson, 382.

²³ Draft Memo, Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., to Inspector General, Subject: Report of Investigation, 92nd Division, 14-19 July 43, dated 4-5 August 1943, Ft. Huachuca File, Inspection Tours, United States—Virginia and Numbered Units Box, Davis Papers, quoted in Dale E. Wilson, "Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S. 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 56 (July 1992): 484.

²⁴ Representative Ike Skelton-Weekly Column, week of 13 March, 2005 found at <http://www.house.gov/skelton/col050313.htm>; accessed on 10 October, 2007.

²⁵ Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Cultures," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (3rd Quarter 2005): 46.

²⁶ Robert H. Scales, Jr., "Culture Centric Warfare," *Proceedings: U.S. Navy Institute* 130 (October 2004): 32 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 11 November 2007.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ William J. Flavin commented: Interesting choice of word as this has been the SOF Mantra for several years using that exact term. I think it is interesting that Scales uses it. Schoomaker used it in 2000 it was first developed in 1998 and used in briefings before Congress by ARSOF in the 2000 to 2006 timeframe.

²⁹ Scales, "Culture Centric Warfare," 32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of Their Curious Relationship," *Military Review* 85 (March-April 2005): 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Casper W. Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power," speech at the National Press Club, Washington D.C., 28 November 1984. Quoted in Montgomery McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," *Military Review* 85 (March-April 2005): 27.

³⁸ McFate, 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁰ Franz Boas, "Scientists as Spies," *The Nation* 109 (20 December 1919): 797. Quoted in McFate, "Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship," 29.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ McFate, 29.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Science and Practical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967). Quoted in Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Cultures," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (3rd Quarter 2005): 48.

⁴⁷ Department of Defense, *Human Terrain Team Preliminary Assessment: Executive Summary July-August 2007* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2007), 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁰ Department of Defense, *Defense Language Transformation Roadmap* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, February 2005), 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3-6.

⁵³ Department of Defense, *Report to Congress on Implementation of DoD Directive 3000.05; Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations (Final Coordinating Draft)*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 2007), ii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, ii.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

