INTRODUCTION

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A DIVERSE MIXTURE OF WAR FIGHTERS, cultural experts, anthropologists, government officials, and strategic analysts first convened in March 2009 at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, to discuss the impact culture has on both conflict behavior and counterinsurgency environments. The Naval Postgraduate School's Program for Culture and Conflict Studies hosted this "enlightening conference aimed at exploring the importance of culture and its role in conflicts around the globe," which marked the starting point for our two-year study of culture, conflict, and counterinsurgency.[1] As part of this study, experts have provided their analysis of cultural dynamics in a variety of conflict environments and historical contexts. These studies focus not only on the current war zones of Afghanistan, Pakistan's northwest frontier, and Iraq but also on past hot spots like Ireland and Vietnam and one very cold spot: the circumpolar Arctic region. As we reported in 2009, "Understanding the importance of culture in conflict has prompted many government agencies and the military to attempt to create specialists dedicated to the analysis of human terrain dimensions of the battle space," several of whom presented analyses at our conference. "International experts in modeling techniques provided additional insight into their methodology and the application of cultural modeling by using insurgent movements in Iraq and Afghanistan as case studies."[2]

The key objectives of this project were to assess and debate the following questions: Is cultural understanding important, or is it merely a fad of the day? Where and how is culture important in a national security and foreign policy context? What frameworks and narratives should be used to analyze

culture? How are cultural phenomena and information best used by the military? What are the challenges of cultural data collection and application? What constitutes cultural data? What assumptions need to be made explicit concerning such data? What has been the impact of cultural understanding on our recent counterinsurgencies? Does it take intimate cultural information and knowledge to counter an insurgency? What are we good at here, and where do we fail miserably?

Among the many fascinating presentations and discussions at our original 2009 conference, a number of participants have agreed to share their ideas and insights on the nexus of culture, conflict, and counterinsurgency and to elaborate on them in the form of chapters in this book. This group includes academic experts in fields as diverse as military history and cultural anthropology, as well as military service personnel and defense planners who have practiced the art of counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as past battle spaces like Vietnam. Their insights provide us with the essential ingredients required to prevent, quite simply, the tragic repetition of history. By sharing their insights from the field, and from history, they can help enlighten our strategy and tactics in the proverbial War on Terror and help prevent our being drawn into a largely self-imposed quagmire resulting from the unwillingness not only to learn from history but also to adapt to the specific cultural context of the current fight. We clearly saw this in the early stages after our invasion of Iraq, and it has been a continuing problem haunting our efforts in Afghanistan. Indeed, as suggested in the following pages, Afghanistan might well be the poster child for a military intervention plagued by misunderstanding a country's history, culture, and environment. But at the same time, it serves as a valuable reminder of the enduring salience of cultural understanding and the continuing strategic and diplomatic value of cultural knowledge.

A PATH TO VICTORY: NAVIGATING THE NEXUS OF CULTURE AND CONFLICT

By better understanding the cultural foundations of these protracted conflicts that still rage across Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan, reorienting our efforts to rebuild Afghanistan from the bottom up, so that the institutions we nurture are compatible with the enduring cultural topography of the conflict zone, and shifting our strategy from an attritional engagement where time is on our opponent's side to a smarter war plan that similarly embraces the cultural dimensions of the conflict, a meaningful and enduring victory may still

be achieved in part. Just as Vietnam was doomed not by any inherent tactical or strategic realities to be a military failure for the United States and its allies but instead by the choices made (or sometimes not made) in the course of the fight, Afghanistan need not become Obama's—or contemporary America's—Vietnam. But without significant course change reflecting cultural nuances, Afghanistan may yet ultimately become America's Vietnam.

The chapters of this book are organized into two separate sections. Part I is on "Culture and Conflict: From Theory to Methodology," and Part II is on "Culture and Conflict: From Methodology to Practice; Lessons from Afghanistan." Part I examines the nexus of culture, conflict, and strategic intervention and asks the following questions: *Where and how is culture important in a national security and foreign policy context? Is cultural understanding important, or is it merely a fad of the day?* After making the case that it is indeed important, one might argue essential for victory on the War on Terror, we proceed to answer the subsequent questions: *What constitutes cultural data? What assumptions need to be made explicit concerning such data? What frameworks should be used to analyze culture? And lastly, what are the challenges of cultural data collection and application?*

Part II addresses how cultural phenomena and information can best be used by the military and addresses the following questions: *What has been the impact of cultural understanding on our recent counterinsurgencies? Does it take intimate cultural information/knowledge to effectively counter an insurgency? And, ultimately, what are we good at here, and where must we improve things?* It concludes that it does indeed take intimate cultural information and knowledge to counter the insurgencies that have erupted ever since kinetic operations in Operation Enduring Freedom achieved their early successes. The authors contributing to Part II of this work consider the impacts of cultural understanding on our counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan and reflect on lessons learned, including the use of cultural knowledge in doctrine and training, in policy formation, and in the context of future conflicts around the world.

PART I: CULTURE AND CONFLICT: FROM THEORY TO METHODOLOGY

Alexei Gavriel, a member of the Canadian Forces, was deployed on Operation Athena in Kandahar, Afghanistan, as an intelligence analyst. He "propose[s] to demystify the practices of anthropology by integrating its unique concepts

and collection methodologies into two formal intelligence disciplines, cultural intelligence and ethnographic intelligence."[3] Gavriel is both a war fighter and an applied anthropologist conducting research on the integration of sociocultural knowledge into contemporary military operational planning and intelligence. He argues that "[s]everal misunderstandings and misconceptions regarding cultural intelligence exist. Cultural intelligence is not the uncovering of a hidden or secret code that allows the user unrestricted control over a population, just as there are no secret handshakes or passwords. These misconceptions likely stem from further misconceptions about what 'culture' is. Cultural intelligence is an intelligence discipline that analyzes cultural knowledge to assess or interpret the impact it has on the operating environment, adversary, and operational planning considerations. It has strategic-, operational-, and tactical-level implications."[4]

Professor Marc Tyrell from the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies (IIS) at Carleton University in Ottawa examines the "applied use of evolutionary theory in modeling culture and cultural conflicts. Over the past 150 years in the social sciences, evolutionary theory has been misapplied, misunderstood, hijacked by megalomaniacs, and attacked by people who have no concept of what a theory is. Throughout the time that it has been in intellectual play, however, it has proven to be one of the most robust theoretical explanation we have for change over time."[5] As Tyrell recounts, "There have been a lot of changes, refinements, and arguments about evolutionary theory since Darwin's day, and we now have a much better, albeit much more complex, idea of how it works and, perhaps more important, what parts of it can and should be applied outside the area of biology."[6] Tyrell "outline[s] the possible applications of Darwinian evolutionary theory to 'culture,'" looking at Mosul, where "we can see that many of the existing institutional barriers to change had been removed during the occupation. This, however, meant that people [have] defaulted 'back' to their real source of security and governance—the tribe and neotribe. Attempts to impose a governance structure totally at odds with that default value were doomed to fail. However, reconstructing the battle space by looking at the reality and by sharing the 'authorship' [would allow] for the co-construction of a narrative that would be acceptable for both sides. This narrative, in turn, is a symbolic structure that, with time, could embed itself back into Iraqi culture, gaining emotional connotations among the population by lived experience."[7]

Moreover, "There are certain implications of the cultural coding system being partially communicative ([that is], stored outside the individual). In cultural evolution, for example, the coding system is much more subject to mutation, both initially and on a[n ongoing] day-to-day basis. Furthermore, cultural evolution is inherently partially Lamarkian, that is, the inheritance of acquired characteristics. These 'inherited' cultural codes may be very strongly embedded in the neurological structures of the brain as a result of early child-hood learning—a 'learning' that is often stored in narratives."[8] Tyrell asks: "Can a Darwinian evolutionary theory of culture be predictive without fall-ing into either the determinist or teleological fallacies it has in the past?"[9] It probably can be, he concludes, but "with only a limited time horizon. In any given work space at particular points in time, there are only a limited number of options available to compete effectively. Which option(s) that will be chosen by a relevant group will be constrained by their closeness to existing cultural narratives in both form and lived reality. Perhaps this explains why Muslim sympathy for al-Qaeda was so high in the 1980s ([when it was seen to be] op-posing an invader) and plummeted after the September 11 attacks ([when it was seen to be attacking] civilians)."[10]

Steffen Merten is a human terrain researcher specializing in Middle East-ern tribal systems and a former social network analysis researcher at the Naval Postgraduate School Core Lab. He served with Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003 to 2004 and is currently developing an integrated methodology for mod-eling tribal systems. In his chapter, he outlines ways that data fusion may be achieved and how it can dramatically enhance the analytical capabilities of cultural analysts, especially in tribal social systems. By using visual analytics theory and technology to conduct the labor-intensive aspects of data fusion, and accepting the theoretical justification of fusion among the geospatial, re-lational, and temporal data dimensions, the field of cultural analysis seems poised to make a major contribution to counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. The software developers racing to fill this technological need include I2, Ac-cess Pro, and a company called Palantir Technologies, which has proven es-pecially well suited for data fusion during the author's ongoing analysis of the Omani tribal system and is discussed in detail by Hartunian and Germann (2008).

However, Merten cautions that these software advances must be accom-panied by two caveats: First, that, no matter how powerful or versatile the

technology, a deep understanding of the social system will always depend on "expert opinion familiar with the culture, indoctrination procedures, and institutional foundations" that lend significance to relationships, as well as the skill, intuition, and innovation of the analyst/collector. Second, we must also refrain from attempting to reinvent the wheel by tapping existing sources of social data ranging from deployed company intelligence officers to civil affairs teams operating outside the combat zone. While the need for effective human terrain analysis seems especially acute in the combat zone, as one colleague described it, "Building these models in the war zone is like trying to build a bike while running beside it." Just as we have accumulated a wealth of geospatial data for use in any future deployment throughout the globe, we must have the strategic foresight to match and fuse this information with its relational context. By harnessing technology to fuse geospatial, relational, and temporal data in a meaningful way, we may drastically enhance the field of cultural analysis and further empower the war fighter in his or her mission of defeating contemporary and future insurgency.

PART TWO: CULTURE AND CONFLICT:
FROM METHODOLOGY TO PRACTICE;
LESSONS FROM AFGHANISTAN

Starting out the second part of this work, Professor Thomas Barfield of Boston University and president of the American Institute for Afghanistan Studies "examine[s] the role culture, customs, and justice play in the diverse landscape of Afghanistan. One of the initial problems with cultural studies, argues Barfield, is the mere definition of the word *culture*, a definition that varies wildly within different fields of study. Economists and political scientists discard many of the all-encompassing 'kitchen sink' definitions of culture—the very same definitions anthropologists adhere to. What we really want to know are the linkages and interdependencies [among] society, economy, [and] politics, and the only way to get a handle on th[ose] is to approach [them] in a holistic fashion. Discovering what habits exist in a given society, how one sees the world, how one interacts in the world: That's culture, it is learned behavior. This, however, requires an open mind, and it is precisely one reason why many anthropologists prefer to work alone rather than in teams wearing uniforms and carrying guns. The way people express their world is through their language; it is really a linguistic process, and it is important to look at it like that and not study [other people's] world[s] through translation. European states

and America [have] all endorsed a centralized state government for places like Afghanistan because without it they cannot understand how law and order can exist. But, in fact, what we see in a place like Afghanistan [is that] we have social order in places with weak or nonexistent states. Why is that? Because at the local level there is a cultural code of conduct, an evaluation of behavior that allows people to be evaluated without the need for government intervention or oversight. Of course the biggest example of this is *Pashtunwali*" (the way of the Pashtun), "a legal code that explains what's right [and] what's wrong; but it is also a standard behavior, more precisely, a standard of autonomy. The important thing to remember is [that], from an outsiders' view, particularly a military outsiders' view, [one is] immersed in this local system. The question is what the interaction is; it's not state to state, it is individual to individual. Here the whole question of understanding what motivates people is not ideological; it's not necessarily [about] economic motives; it could be larger cultural motives. When asking why culture matters in a context such as this, Professor Barfield believes it is understanding the world you are interacting with. With so many people now in Afghanistan, it becomes a significantly important question that has political, policy, and strategic ramifications."[11]

In the next chapter, Thomas H. Johnson examines the social and political roles of religious figures in southern Afghanistan in an attempt to develop a more nuanced understanding of the present insurgency. Islamic groups and Afghan mullahs play a critical role in politics in southern Afghanistan; the Taliban, Deobandis, Sufis, and Tablighi Jamaat are the most important religious groups and influences there. Religion and politics are blurred as religious authorities frequently shift between religious and political roles. The West has had a tendency to misunderstand the relevance and implications of these roles. Jihad is an important feature of Islamic life in southern Afghanistan. Large numbers of southern insurgents are fighting in support of jihad and the implementation of sharia (Islamic law). Several predominant religious figures and influences tend to advocate jihad. The West has underestimated the role of jihad in the present Taliban movement. The ulema council in southern Afghanistan represents a sector of the clergy that has remained relatively unradicalized by war. Insurgents and jihadists have frequently assassinated members of this council because it offers legitimate opposition to the Taliban's radicalization of young madrasah students and unemployed villagers. The political activities of two Islamic groups that represent a large number of rural and poor Afghans are misunderstood. Some Sufi groups in

Kandahar have allied with insurgents since 2003 and have promoted rural resistance to secular authority. The Tablighi Jamaat, though avowedly apolitical and detached from the insurgency, has a relationship with the mujahedeen who regularly attend this group's meetings. These issues have important policy implications. Political and military strategies aimed at countering the Taliban insurgency while ignoring the Taliban jihad are ill founded and will probably not succeed. Currently there is very little contact between NATO or the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the ulema of southern Afghanistan. Rather than stereotype all religious leaders and institutions as militantly fundamentalist, policies that incorporate certain religious groups into civil society should be considered. And there is a critical need to fix the corrupt justice system in Afghanistan. A central component of the Taliban's strategy to win the trust and confidence of the Afghan population is based on the role of Taliban mullahs as arbitrators of individual and community disputes. This shadow justice system is proving very popular.

Feroz Hassan Khan, a retired brigadier general in the Pakistan Army and currently on the faculty of the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, discusses Pakistan's turbulent history, noting that, "[f]or most of its existence, Pakistan has been dominated by a view that it faces an existential threat from India. Pakistan's leadership has viewed national security almost exclusively through this prism at the expense of economic, political, judicial, and social demands."[12] Khan argues that Pakistan today "continues to find itself at a crossroads with a growing strategic threat from India's emerging force doctrines, internal security threats to the viability of the state, and a massing insurgency within the disputed tribal borderlands on the west. Facing threats on multiple fronts, Pakistan must meet the challenge to reorient its military forces to face them all—but how? In October 2008, a joint session of parliament unanimously passed a resolution calling extremism, militancy, and terrorism [grave dangers] to the stability of the nation-state. The leaders underscored that cross-border attacks would not occur on other countries and [that] all foreign fighters would be dispelled. Still, Pakistan has not been able to strike a precise balance between the asymmetric problems it faces of internal extremism and external conventional threats."[13] Khan argues that "three factors help explain Pakistan's [hesitation about] shifting toward a counterinsurgency-focused military. First, India's evolving force posture threatens a near-term conventional conflict that could threaten the very existence of the state. Pakistan has always sought to maintain a viable

defense against conventional and nuclear attack from India, and only with meaningful international assurances will Pakistan shift its force posture away from India. Second, [there is] a persistent and significant deficit of trust that exists with the United States that compels reluctance on Pakistan's part. Unilateral impatience and verbal arm twisting on the part of the U[nited] S[tates] towards Pakistan does not build sufficient confidence between the two nations, particularly while Pakistan is attempting to achieve a balanced relationship between the civilian and military apparatus. Third, the unpopularity of the 'War on Terror' and operations in Afghanistan and drone operations in Pakistan [have] created a domestic legitimacy problem for civilian leaders in Pakistan. Cooperation with the United States is politically damaging for politicians as they attempt to cater to both their diplomatic partners and a restless domestic population. Each reason alone cannot fully explain the failure of Pakistan to evolve towards a more nuanced counterinsurgency strategy, but together they help provide a clearer framework for why Pakistan's military remains conventionally focused."[14]

At the time Colonel Michael R. Fenzel, a PhD candidate at the Naval Postgraduate School, wrote his chapter, he was designated to take command of the 2nd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, at Fort Bliss, Texas, in July 2010. In his previous assignment, he had commanded 1-503rd Airborne Battalion, 173rd Airborne Brigade, in Vicenza, Italy, and subsequently commanded Task Force Eagle through Operation Enduring Freedom IX in Afghanistan. He served as a deputy brigade commander in Afghanistan for the 1st Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division in Regional Command East (2005–2006). A year later, he returned to Paktika Province for fifteen months as the commander of 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, which became Task Force Eagle, responsible for the border districts of Eastern Paktika and 400 kilometers of border frontage with Pakistan. In his chapter, he observes that historically the rural population in modern Afghanistan has rejected all large-scale reforms attempted by a central government. Unfortunately, change acceptable to the tribes will simply not come from the center. Establishing security in this war-torn land is achievable only if we focus our efforts and resources at the district level, where the subtribes are culturally dominant. Nowhere in Afghanistan is this more pressing than along the border of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). It is commonly accepted that the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other foreign fighters use the FATA as a safe haven from which to plan, resource, stage, and launch attacks in the

border districts and deeper into Afghanistan's interior. Since 2006, the number of foreign insurgents involved in the border fight has substantially increased, which strengthens the insurgency and decreases security. The struggle to secure this area has become the front line in the counterinsurgency fight and the coalition's most important strategic task. If we can establish security and stabilize the border provinces and districts in southern and eastern Afghanistan, Fenzel believes the accompanying momentum may guide the rest of the country to a sustainable peace. The problem is that the insurgents are most effective in these rural areas, and limited troop levels make a confounding proposition on a wider scale. He thus proposes a fundamental shift in the way we think about fighting the counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. To set the conditions for success, we need to engage tribal leaders and establish a district-level security architecture in which the district governor is the key leader elected by the *shura*. In conjunction, he adds, we need a bottom-up focus that places the coalition maneuver company commander where he can work closely with the district governor. Next, we need to redistribute critical assets now located at the provincial level down to the district level. Afghan security forces should be redistributed to districts and rural areas, and we should dismantle entities like the provincial reconstruction teams and reassign those assets to the maneuver battalions for use in the maneuver companies at the district level. Finally, he concluded, we need to integrate native Afghan intellectual capital into our maneuver company operations to improve cultural engagement and provide expertise in critical development skills.

ENS Bebber is an information warfare officer at Navy Information Operations Command, Maryland, and served as the information operations officer at Joint Provincial Reconstruction Team Khost in 2008. Information operations (IO) traditionally suffer from a lack of available metrics by which planners can assess their environment and measure the effectiveness of their programs. This often places IO practitioners at a distinct disadvantage when attempting to gain the confidence of unit commanders, who are tasked with allocating scarce battlefield resources and who are often skeptical of information operations as a whole. This project was an attempt to develop an information operations environmental assessment tool that can be used and replicated at the unit level (battalion or less) for use by planners to establish an initial benchmark (where am I?) and measure progress toward achieving the IO program goals and objectives (where do I want to go?). The provincial reconstruction team in Khost province, Afghanistan, needed a tool by which

the leadership could benchmark current conditions and evaluate the information environment under which the population lived. It was believed that such a tool could provide clues as to whether our IO (and overall provincial reconstruction team, or PRT) efforts were having the intended effect.

And, in our final chapter, Major Nathan R. Springer, chief of operations at the U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center, examines what he believes to be a successful implementation of population-centric counterinsurgency strategy in northeastern Afghanistan through the lens of his experiences executing it in his area of operation as an Army troop commander from May 2007 to January 2008 and as the Squadron Fires Effects Coordination Cell (FECC) officer in charge. He recounts how his unit, the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry, 173rd ABCT, arrived at the decision to apply a population-centric strategy. He outlines the differences between an enemy-centric and a population-centric focus, the transition points between the two strategies and within the population centric strategy, and implementation of the population-centric strategy by line of operation. Finally, he describes the battlefield calculus in terms of the time, patience, and personal relationships required to at once empower the traditional Afghan leadership.

KNOWING THE ENEMY

Throughout the history of warfare, commanders have constantly stressed the importance of knowing the enemy and taking these lessons to heart; the United States spends substantial amounts of money on intelligence gathering during both war and peacetime. So, while knowing the enemy is an important factor in modern conventional warfare, knowing the country and the culture of its population is even more important in a counterinsurgency environment. We have seen the results that stem from a lack of cultural training of our deployed soldiers. Incidents like the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq and the burning of dead Taliban bodies in Afghanistan were signs of the dehumanization of the enemy that resulted from cultural ignorance. Cultural understanding results in the foresight needed to prevent civil affairs disasters. Extensive knowledge of the Muslim culture is vital to the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan because Islam is a total way of life in both countries.[15]

In addition to Islam, soldiers must understand the secular cultural differences of the people with whom they are interacting. The Afghan Pashtun tribal code of *Pashtunwali*, for example, is an extremely important factor in parts of Afghanistan in defining the relations among Afghans as well as others. An

in-depth knowledge of *Pashtunwali* by the U.S. military would allow for the assessment of specific tactics and procedures in the context of the Afghan culture and society where they are being employed. Operations executed with a blatant lack of cultural knowledge can result in a variety of negative consequences, as we have seen throughout our engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the U.S. military does conduct cultural training of its personnel before deployments, most of this training is inadequate and almost exclusively on Islam at the expense of country-specific customs like *Pashtunwali*.

U.S. military personnel are in contact with the local populace everyday in Afghanistan and other countries in which they are deployed. For its first month or so in country, a unit will conduct routine patrols to determine the lay of the land and gain a basic understanding of the area of operations. As time goes by, the unit will eventually learn which neighborhoods and villages are friendly to U.S. forces, where influential people live, which neighborhoods carry a greater likelihood of enemy contact, and so on. Unfortunately, by the time a unit has fully grasped its environment, their deployment is near its end and the next unit is ready to take over and restart the whole process of learning to understand the area. Important relationships within the local population that took great time and effort to build are weakened once the new unit arrives. While an outgoing commander might share his experience and tribal contacts with the incoming commander to establish a context for the new unit, a lot of the information is lost in transition. In other words, a unit might achieve relative success in an area over its six- to twelve-month deployment, but the process is dramatically slowed down or even reversed once a new unit arrives. Therefore, each unit must be fully prepared to maximize its time in country, or it will achieve minimal progress in reconstruction and security by the time the replacements arrive.

The U.S. military places most of its emphasis on training for combat operations, as it should. In fact, many would argue that too much emphasis on cultural training could take away from the level of combat readiness of each individual soldier.[16] Although this mind-set embraces the fear of sending U.S. soldiers into harm's way without proper military training, its focus is misguided. A conventional war is very straightforward and basically comes down to killing the enemy before he kills you. Training in basic marksmanship and war-fighting skills is the main focus because victory over the clearly defined and identifiable enemy is of the greatest importance. Yet, in a counterinsurgency, the opinion and beliefs of the population are even more important than

the body count of enemy insurgents. Unfortunately, U.S. troops still associate victory with enemy body counts and decisive victories. For example, soldiers will seldom run around a patrol base bragging about how many schools they visited during the day in support of the reconstruction effort. The commendations and captive audiences are usually reserved for stories of killing the enemy. U.S. troops go through strenuous training that prepares them for the worst-case scenario in a combat zone. So it is difficult to arrive in hostile territory and place that aggressive mentality off to the side to concentrate on the hearts and minds of the population, but that is exactly what they must do. U.S. military personnel are placed in an extremely contradictory combat zone where they are handing out school supplies to children at one moment and then fighting for their lives the next. The ensuing mental strain cannot be taken lightly, but it is a necessary evil. Our troops obviously have the training required to protect themselves, which is why our army is able to defend itself more effectively than any other military in the world, but that only allows for short-term victories. To achieve long-term success, American soldiers must have the knowledge to peacefully engage the local population and gain their support.

The cultural training conducted by the U.S. Army has improved since the initial invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, but there is still much more room for improvement. If they had time, most army units would start operation-specific training a little over one year prior to a deployment. Current operational deployment tempo would not allow for this kind of timeline, but that is the best-case scenario. Among other things, Afghan training usually consists of mock face-to-face Pashto or Dari. Senior company leaders usually receive more advanced training because they are the ones expected to lead most of the patrols once in Afghanistan. In terms of tactical operations in Afghanistan, the contrast between the enemy body count and popular support is important and represents divergent perspectives in a counterinsurgency. A focus on the number of dead insurgents implies that the conflict is winnable by killing as many of the enemy as possible. Alternatively, a focus on popular support means the "hearts and minds" or, better put, "trust and confidence" of the local population are targeted. A military is typically more proficient at killing the enemy, so it is difficult to shift gears and concentrate on interaction with the populace. Situations occur on patrols when soldiers must determine how their actions will influence the civilian population around them and then make a quick, well-informed decision. Increasingly common events like the

Taliban using villages for cover in Afghanistan must be met with the proper response from U.S. soldiers. When the priority is placed on enemy body count instead of gaining popular support, then the high risk of collateral damage is accepted as well. For example, if a U.S. patrol takes fire from a mosque and then kill the enemy while destroying the mosque in the process, then the destruction of the mosque was necessary for an increased enemy body count. A focus on popular support would mean that another tactic would be used that might involve greater risk to U.S. soldiers but would leave the mosque intact and possibly improve relations with the Afghans who use the mosque. A tactic that has become too common for U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan is to immediately escalate to air power when Taliban militants put up a strong defense inside a village. This usually results in civilian casualties and loses the support of the Afghan population. In each of the situations mentioned, the typical military response is to place unit security above all other factors regardless of any religious or cultural implications. In contrast, a greater focus on religious and cultural training allows the soldier to view situations through multiple perspectives rather than only that of the U.S. military. From basic training to the arrival at his or her first unit, a soldier is taught to view the world through a military perspective, but it is time to evolve the training to actually coincide with the counterinsurgent warfare in Afghanistan.

The United States already has a tarnished reputation in parts of the Middle East, and the actions of the military can be used to improve relations on the local level. U.S. ground troops who leave the safety of the forward operating base (FOB) put their lives at risk to provide security for the indigenous civilian population. However, these actions alone will not amount to anything if the population does not see tangible results. Trust and friendship are gained after consistent acts of selfless service and good will to the Afghan people. Soldiers must demonstrate that they sincerely care for the well-being and safety of the populace to build common bonds. Once this is accomplished, the number of local nationals willing to come forward and give information on the location of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and enemy ambushes and offer basic support should increase. The intelligence produced by the civilian population inevitably saves the lives of both American and local security forces. In other words, the rewards for showing respect and dignity toward religion and culture are beyond measure. However, while good relations with the civilian population are a force multiplier, any bad relations can have devastating consequences for a unit. When incidents

like Abu Ghraib occur on the tactical level, they have negative results on the overall political and military strategies as well. Units on the ground that had nothing to do with the atrocities are seen as guilty by association and must strive to regain the trust of the population in their respective areas. In turn, commanders must not only worry about the reputation of their own unit, but they must also execute damage control for the irresponsible actions of other units. Every soldier, sailor, marine, and airman represents the United States, and their actions will either feed negative stereotypes or develop positive views among the Iraqi and Afghan populations.

The predeployment tactical training that the U.S. Army currently provides for its soldiers is above standard for the purpose of force protection and combat-oriented operations. Furthermore, the training required for soldiers to kill and capture insurgents is excellent, and the evidence lies with the constantly rising body count of the enemy. Training was taken one step further as soldiers were taught how to interact with the civilian population in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, despite all the media attention concerning Islam since 9/11, the U.S. Army has failed to recognize the true importance of religion and how understanding Muslim beliefs is a key to interacting within many cultures. Part of the problem is the military culture of combat arms that promotes the belief that any training not oriented toward combat is pointless. The ultimate glory in the current military culture, as in the past, is achieved by finding and destroying the enemy, not building worthwhile relationships with the civilian population. The current training allows U.S. soldiers to basically maintain the status quo in countries such as Afghanistan.

Providing effective across-the-board cultural training for a massive organization like the U.S. Army is a daunting task because there are so many deployable units, and the operations tempo is extremely high at this time. There are several important societal norms like *Pashtunwali* and tribal affiliation that are extremely important to soldiers on deployments to Afghanistan. In an ideal world, all those concepts would be taught to deploying soldiers. However, the reality is that Army units place a greater priority on training and maintaining their war-fighting skills because that is the seemingly main job of the military. While using Islam as the basis of cultural training may not address other important factors of Afghanistan, it is a way of finding middle ground with the U.S. military culture. There are some lessons that soldiers will have to learn on the ground while under fire, but their training must enable them to minimize those situations. In the end, soldiers would finally be

equipped with the tools necessary to properly interact with the civilian populace and achieve more than maintenance of the status quo.

It is to this important task that we now turn in the pages ahead.

NOTES

1. Coeditor Thomas H. Johnson is founder and director of the Program for Culture and Conflict Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School. We kindly thank Sarah Kauffmann, Matthew DuPee, and Matthew Dearing for their contributions to this introduction, through their excellent presentation summaries and abstracts as presented in their jointly-authored 2009 conference report on the CCS website. See Sara Kaufmann, Matt DuPée, and Matt Dearing, "Conference on Culture, Cultural Modeling, Counterinsurgency and Conflict Behavior," *The Culture and Conflict Review*, April 1, 2009; available at www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/WebJournal/Article.aspx?ArticleID=31.

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