Part Three: Militarization, Militarism, and the Social Sciences

Session 11
Imperial Social Science: The “Cultural Turn,” Combat Ethnography, and Humans as Terrain
Preface

→ US Army’s Human Terrain System (HTS)
→ Incorporate social scientists into a program designed to gather “ethnographic intelligence” in support of counterinsurgency requirements
→ Anthropologists in universities: critiques & ethics, methodology, theory
→ Arguments for and against HTS?
Theory and Practice of the Human Terrain System

Iraq: Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

→ “situational awareness” vs. “cultural awareness”
→ July 2004: Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force (later, JIEDDO, precursor to HTS)

→ Identifying the network of contacts that supported bomb making
→ Cultural Preparation of the Environment (CPE), April 2005.
→ “culture-centric” or “population-centric”
→ Scales (2004):

“wars are won as much by creating alliances, leveraging nonmilitary advantages, reading intentions, building trust, converting opinions, and managing perceptions— all tasks that demand an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation. Clearly, these imperatives place an increased premium on the ability of the U.S. military to understand the nature and character of war, as well as the cultural proclivities of the enemy”

→ Scales: “World War IV”: “culture awareness” + the ability to “build ties of trust will offer protection to our troops more effectively than body armor”:

“To win World War IV, the military must be culturally knowledgeable enough to thrive in an alien environment. Victory will be defined more in terms of capturing the psycho-cultural rather than the geographical high ground. Understanding and empathy will be important weapons of war” (Scales, 2006).
Gen. David Petraeus, the decisive terrain of warfare would be the “cultural terrain”:

“cultural awareness is a force multiplier, reflects [sic] our recognition that knowledge of the cultural ‘terrain’ can be as important as, and sometimes even more important than, knowledge of the geographic terrain. This observation acknowledges that the people are, in many respects, the decisive terrain, and that we must study that terrain in the same way that we have always studied the geographic terrain” (Petraeus, 2006, p. 51).
Defining “Human Terrain”

“the human population and society in the operational environment as defined and characterized by socio-cultural, anthropologic, and ethnographic data and other non-geophysical information about the human population and society” (Kipp et al., 2006, p. 14, fn 2).

Launching HTS

→ Identifying the bomb makers as the intelligence priority rather than focusing on the bomb technology

→ Montgomery McFate, linked knowledge of the “human terrain” with work to counter IEDs (McFate, 2005b)
Counterinsurgency (COIN) Doctrine

→ Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency, 2006

→ “population-centric” counterinsurgency model: “protecting the people against the insurgents”

→ A counterinsurgent must “know the people, the topography, economy, history, religion, and culture”

→ “social network analysis and socio-cultural factors analysis”

→ “this knowledge allows predictive analysis of enemy actions [and] contributes to the ability to develop effective information operations and civil-military operations”

→ Early 2006: FMSO oversaw the creation of the Human Terrain System for TRADOC
Anthropologizing the Military, or Militarizing Anthropology?

Montgomery McFate: anthropologists could help to remedy the lack of knowledge about “adversary culture” on the part of soldiers, diplomats, and intelligence agents and thus help prevent any abuses of the people occupied by U.S. forces.

Lack of cultural knowledge was the product of “the almost total absence of anthropology within the national-security establishment” (McFate, 2005a, p. 24; 2005c)

(Centre for Naval Analyses: U.S. armed forces employed a total of 532 persons with degrees in anthropology)
→ Anthropological knowledge could save lives
→ Anthropologists could exercise influence and help change policy while making their discipline more relevant

→ “ethnographic intelligence” to penetrate opposing networks on a global scale (see Renzi, 2006, p. 17)

→ One stated purpose of HTS: “to support operational decision-making, enhance operational effectiveness, and preserve and share socio-cultural institutional knowledge.”
HTS Organization and Human Terrain Teams (HTTs)

→ U.S. Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Fort Eustis, Virginia
→ HTS reports directly to TRADOC’s Intelligence Support Activity (TRISA)
→ HTTs, “recruit, train, deploy, and support an embedded, operationally focused socio-cultural capability”
→ HTTs trained at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and other Army installations
→ “conduct operationally relevant, socio-cultural research and analysis” and “develop and maintain a socio-cultural knowledge base”: HTS Research Reachback Center at Ft. Monroe
Human Terrain Team

Leader

Duties: Commander's Human Terrain Advisor, Integration of human terrain with MDMP, Represent population at unit planning.

Human Terrain Social Scientist

Duties: Advise HTT and unit staff, conduct/manage ethnographic/social science research and analysis.

Human Terrain Research Manager

Duties: Integrate research plan with unit intelligence collection plan. Secondary researcher.

Human Terrain Analyst

Duties: Primary human terrain researcher for Coalition elements (SOF, patrols, NGOs GOs etc)

This is the prototypical Human Terrain Team as envisioned by HTS. Each team, aside from the 5 standard slots have up to four additional slots for more Human Terrain Analysts and Research Managers. There is a clear differentiation in roles played by the two social scientists. The first is supposed to have an anthropology/sociology background, while the second is expected to have regional expertise.

→ By 2010, HTS grew in size to include 550 employees
→ HTS fielded 10 HTTs in Iraq and 17 more in Afghanistan, in 2010
→ $726 million in government funding from 2007 through 2013
→ Salaries: $200,000—$300,000
→ McFate: “majority of newly minted anthropologists brutally compete for a limited number of underpaid university faculty appointments” (2005a, p. 28)
→ By the middle of 2009, only 6 HTS employees possessed a PhD in anthropology, and 4 held MAs in anthropology, while most of the HTS staff had degrees in fields unrelated to the stated objectives of the program

→ Training:
Current HTS Training Cycle

55 Training Days

Inprocessing (5 Days):
- Foundations Skills (10 Days): Introduction
- Research Operations (20 Days): Common
- Individual Track Training (10 days): Individual
- Research Ops Exercise (10 days): Collective

Graduation and Transition Ceremony

Pre-Mission Certification (15 Days)

Deploy to FPLA (8 Weeks) then to THEATER

Culture and Language Program (14 x 2 hour sessions – 2 / Week)

Foundations (10 days): mission & organization of HTS, Army organization & values, how BCT commanders and staffs see the world, process information, and make decisions, & team dynamics (including practical exercises)

Research Operations (20 days): the HTS Core Competency – how to design, conduct, and report operationally relevant socio-cultural research as part of an HTS team; ethics in research.

Individual Track Training (10 days): the individual skills and knowledge required by each respective position.

Research Operations Exercise (10 days): students form into teams; learning, demonstrating, and being assessed on the HTT collective and individual tasks.

Culture and Language (14 sessions threaded throughout): relevant culture and regional languages.

Source: Human Terrain System, Christopher King, Human Terrain System and the Role of Social Science in Counterinsurgency, Power Point Briefing Presented to the Department of Anthropology, University of Hawaii at Manoa, September 29, 2011.
“controversy plagued the program”
three fatalities; one HTT member tried and convicted for the murder of a detainee; another was arrested on espionage charges
Internal U.S. Army investigations: waste and fraud, racism and sexual harassment
corruption, mismanagement, and abuses
Justifications and Assumptions

→ HTS would reduce the need for “kinetic” (violent) operations that arose from cultural misunderstandings
→ Providing aid to local communities in an effort to win “hearts and minds”, reducing the need for violence
→ HTS officials: HTS is not an intelligence program and that HTS personnel did not take part in targeting decisions
→ HTS officials no substantive conflict between its methods and the AAA’s code of ethics: informed consent; those interviewed would not be coerced; and, identities would be kept confidential

→ Avoid provoking the resentment of the dominated population and thus increase the chance that those dominated would instead turn against resistance forces and support the U.S. occupation and whatever local government it helped to install.
→ HTS would save lives, make war more humane, serve to defeat “insurgents,” and help to “anthropologize” the military