SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND THE IRAQ WAR

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ABSTRACT

Since the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the U.S. Military has come under sharp criticism for its conduct on the ground. Soldiers have demonstrated a severe lack of cultural understanding of the region and its people. This has limited their capabilities to complete their missions and communicate effectively, and caused a more detrimental effect on U.S. foreign relations with the Arab and Muslim Worlds. My research evaluates the weaknesses of the current pre-deployment methods in place by the US military, analyzes the impact of cultural-ignorance in the region and offers suggestions for improvement.

According to several reports produced by and for the U.S. military, insufficient knowledge about the enemy is often the cause for damaged military missions. The USIP reports that “The U.S. military must adapt its training and tactics to the realities of the twenty-first century, in which religion and culture are more powerful and enduring than weapons and soldiers. Military leaders and planners must be educated about these pertinent topics so that they may, in turn, grasp the importance of religion and culture and
the role they play in successfully carrying out the military mission.”¹ This school of thought, however, seems to be absent in current military strategy.

In Iraq specifically, the knowledge of the cultural intricacies and the social status and interrelationships of various tribes led to the capture of Saddam Hussein. Despite the fact that they, “couldn’t even pronounce the names” the 4th Infantry Division was able to create a family tree called a “Mongo Link” depicting key figures among the six major families of the Sunni triangle. Following the chart and figuring out last-known locations, eventually led to Saddam.² On the other hand, lack of information about the enemy cost US Soldiers many oversights. The actions often heightened the sensation of clashing civilizations, and furthered the battle between the West and the Muslim World.

This thesis examines the current and past strategies of the US military training and the initiatives in place to enhance the quality of pre-deployment intercultural training. I examine decision-making, limitations, and the training as well as offers recommendations, which explore the current situation on the ground in Iraq, and the faultiness of current procedures followed by the US Department of Defense.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

*When I took a decision or adapted an alternative, it was after studying every relevant –and many an irrelevant –factor. Geography, tribal structure, religion, social customs, language, appetites, standards –all were at my finger-ends. The enemy I knew almost like my own side.*

-Lieutenant Colonel T.E. Lawrence

In 2004, at the height of the Iraq war, a story leaked and dramatically damaged the status of the U.S. military in Iraq. Seymour Hersh’s breaking report in the *New Yorker*, followed by a *60 Minute* broadcast expos, the actions of atrocious uses of torture in the Abu Ghraib Prison by the 372\textsuperscript{nd} Military Police Company of the U.S. Army.

Reported misconduct, incidents of rape, civilian murder, abuse of the Quran, and an endless list of misdemeanors shocked the global community and fueled the already existing anti-Americanism in the region. The cultural ignorance of the U.S. Military (and the exploitation of the little cultural knowledge they did have) incited more terrorist behavior. Ironically, this was a primary reason for going to war.

Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the U.S. Military has come under sharp criticism for its conduct on the ground. Soldiers have demonstrated a severe lack of cultural understanding of the region and its people. This has limited their capabilities to complete their missions and communicate effectively, causing detrimental effects on U.S. foreign relations with the Arab and Muslim Worlds.

According to several reports produced by and for the U.S. military, insufficient knowledge about the enemy has consistently been the cause for failed military missions
in Iraq. The United States Institute for Peace reports, “The U.S. military must adapt its training and tactics to the realities of the twenty-first century, in which religion and culture are more powerful and enduring than weapons and soldiers. Military leaders and planners must be educated about these pertinent topics so that they may, in turn, grasp the importance of religion and culture and the role they play in successfully carrying out the military mission.”¹ This however, was an absent thought in military strategy before Iraq.

Over the past several decades and foreign invasions, the U.S. Military has experienced an increasing need to implement cultural awareness training both on and off the battlefield. The U.S. military is no longer solely fighting on the battlefield; soldiers are often preparing war-torn countries for life after war. From deployments as early as Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and now in Afghanistan and Iraq, these soldiers are the new face of American Diplomacy. Cultural sensitivity is a necessary in pre-operational training. Soldiers must be taught how to quickly adapt from conventional warfare to civilian engagement. They must learn how cultural factors influence their operations, what reactions their actions can inflict, and how they can gain cooperation from civilians by using diplomatic means. Instead of focusing on the destruction of the enemy’s forces, the military should focus on serving the overall political intent of the U.S. government.²


Fittingly enough, the field of anthropology was largely developed to support military operations of the British Empire and later the American experience. Policy makers drew from resources of the federal government during the Indian Wars, World War II, and later during the Vietnam War. U.S. planners recognized that familiarity with indigenous, non-Western cultures was vital to waging counter-insurgency operations."

Cultural awareness will be a necessary weapon and critical to operational success not just for the war in Iraq, but for all foreign invasions. In his own training courses for the Army Combined Arms Center, Colonel William Wunderle argues that “the more unconventional the adversary (and the more diverse from U.S. cultural norms), the more important it is for the U.S. military to understand the adversary’s society and underlying cultural dynamics as a means of ensuring operational success. Cultural awareness can reduce battlefield friction and the fog of war.”

Not surprisingly, Iraq is not the first battlefield to experience a lack of cultural sensitivity. “In Bosnia, American solders angered Serbs by greeting them with the two-fingered peace sign, a gesture commonly used by their Croat enemies. And the circled-finger “A-OK” was a gross insult to Somalis.” Culture has always played an important role in war, but its context has always been unstructured and unexamined. As academics

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4 William D. Wunderle, Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 1.

and politicians have discovered, this form of intelligence can no longer be ignored. Upon his return from Somalia in 1996, Retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, warned, “The lesson learned [in Somalia] that kept coming out was that we lacked cultural awareness. We needed cultural intelligence going in.”

In Iraq specifically, the knowledge of the cultural intricacies and the social status and interrelationships of various tribes led to the capture of Saddam Hussein. Despite the fact that they “couldn’t even pronounce the names,” the 4th Infantry Division was able to create a family tree called a “Mongo Link” depicting key figures among the six major families of the Sunni triangle. By following the chart, soldiers were able to figure out last-known locations which eventually led to Saddam. On the other hand, lack of information about the enemy has cost U.S. Soldiers many oversights. The actions of the troops often heightened tensions between West and the Arab and Muslim World.

The American or Western fear of the Middle East has been met by a parallel view in the region. Both groups fear what they do not know about the other, eventually leading to deeply rooted stereotypes about the other culture, religion, and lifestyle has. This fear-mongering has been heightened in recent years by global events, further pitting the two sides of the hemisphere against each other. Since the war in Iraq, there has been a series of episodes that only continue to fuel this sentiment. The “new occupation” in Iraq,


coupled with the existing Israeli occupation of Palestine harp on these fears. Smaller political incidents, like the Danish cartoons vilifying the prophet, statements from the Pope denouncing Islam and Mohamed as violent, and U.S. presidential campaigns presenting Islam in an ill-conceived light have continued to provide insurgents with plenty to justify their hatred.

My research evaluates the hatred that has developed on both sides and how this demonstrates the weaknesses of the current pre-deployment methods. I analyze the impact of cultural ignorance in the region, and offers suggestions for improvement. I also examine the current and past strategies of the U.S. military training and the initiatives in place to enhance the quality of pre-deployment intercultural training. This thesis examines decision-making, limitations, and the training as well as offer recommendations. I hope to improve the current situation on the ground in Iraq, and the faultiness of current procedures followed by the U.S. Department of Defense.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter investigates what has been written thus far and what the international academic community offers as advice and guidance. As the literature review demonstrates, this is an area which calls for much more research. The data and methodology reviews the resources and materials which contributed to this thesis. I discuss the various interviews and literature. I also engage in the analysis of various communication theories to demonstrate the importance of intercultural communications
in a time of conflict as it applies to Iraq. I review what academics have previously said about U.S./Arab cultural clashes, as well as the dangers of such generalizations.

Chapter 2 analyzes the failures of the U.S. Military in Iraq. By examining the post-combat phase of the war, and specifically the relationship between soldiers and civilians, the crucial need for proper cross-cultural preparation is obvious. This chapter best demonstrates the critical absence of an intercultural military.

Chapter 3 represents an in-depth review of the various trainings offered for today’s soldiers prior to their deployments to Iraq. This section specifically examines different techniques and simulations accessible within the different departments of the U.S. Military. This includes anecdotes from soldiers, examples of current methods of training, sample smart cards and descriptions from generals. I also interview Dr. Solomon Barak, who has trained elements of the 1st Infantry Division and National Guard on operational culture in Iraq and elements of every deploying battalion.

The fourth chapter further examines the impact of the incidents of misconduct in Iraq on the relationship between the U.S. and the Arab World. This chapter explores the political relationship between both public and popular opinions in both parts of the world. In this section, I discuss the increase in anti-Americanism in the Arab World as a result of poorly executed cultural training. This chapter also discusses the continuing effect on Americans at home as a result of this animosity.

Chapter 5 offers suggestions for improvement and reflects upon recommendations and directives from the Department of Defense and various think tanks. Though these
bodies seem to provide little guidance, they do offer a strong framework to propose change at the national level. This chapter further discusses attempts to increase cultural awareness within the military and the dangers of ignoring this essential tool of war. There have been great strides to create more effective communication, yet considering the overall importance of cross-cultural communication in a time of war, it may not be enough. Providing the necessary support and resources for intercultural communication should be a top priority in the U.S. Military.

Finally, I present new options based on my findings. The conclusion features suggestions and draws examples from what other countries have done or are implementing.

Literature Review

The field of intercultural awareness as it relates to military operations and cross-cultural readiness is limited. In 2005, following a DOD directive, there was an explosion of articles discussing the issue from a strategic standpoint, but little has been written since then. The academic world provides little insight to the examination of soldiers. Furthermore post-operational debriefing with regard to regional and linguistic expertise is practically non-existent.

The incredibly controversial book, *The Arab Mind*, served as the foundation for much of the military’s pre-departure training and knowledge transfer about the Iraqi people. Unfortunately, Raphael Patai’s outdated book (1983) is based on entirely false assumptions of the collective region. He incorrectly lumps linguistic groups into the same
cultural group. Patai uses largely negated stereotypes, and ultimately adds to the distortion of the image of the Arab World.

During his Abu Ghraib series in the New Yorker, Hersh reported that Patai’s book “provided the intellectual backdrop for the torture and sexual abuse that took place at Abu Ghraib.” In the article, an unnamed source explained that, The Arab Mind, was used by the Pentagon to dictate Arab behavior. He wrote, “Two themes predominated: One, that Arabs only understand force, and, two, that the biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation.” Anthropologists have dismissed this book from the dialect about the Arab socio-character. Georgetown University anthropology students study this to better understand “an example of bad, biased social science.”

The Taguba Report, is an executive summary by retired Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba. Taguba authored the internal army report, offering a comprehensive review of the abuses at the Baghdad Correctional Facility (Abu Ghraib). This report was leaked and published in 2004. In his report, he offers interesting recommendations for the correction of the behavior of officers. His report also assesses the training provided to these officers affirming that, “MP units supporting JTF-GTMO received ten days of training in detention facility operations, to include two days of unarmed self-defense, training in interpersonal communication skills, forced cell moves, and correctional officer safety.” This duration of training is inadequate in light of incidents at Abu Ghraib.

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Peter Feaver sheds light on the same issue from a more theoretical perspective. His book, *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force*, explores the various debates concerning the invasion of Iraq through civilian and military camps. The information provided in this text explores civilian and military attitudes through opinion surveys. This data has created an important platform for the discussion on intercultural relations. Feaver’s book is the first to scholastically explore the civil-military relationship in context to U.S. foreign policy.

From a journalistic perspective, Anthony Shadid’s Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, provides an unconventional cultural perspective into the background and lives of the Iraqi people during the Iraq war. Through his individual stories of Iraqis, he is able to capture on-the-ground relations between civilians and U.S. soldiers during the early months of the Iraq invasion.

In Shadid’s work he features various interviews with civilians and their experiences with the soldiers. His well-authored reports feature stories exemplifying the tensions between U.S. Military and civilians. These include husbands who were subject to forced raids, men crying in shame after conflict with soldiers, and men struggling as soldiers force them to the ground on crowded streets, and various others. One man said, “They treat us like cowboys…they use guns, they don’t respect us. They don’t know anything about the Iraqi character, the culture of Iraq, the history of Iraq. They know nothing. I’m a Baghdadi, I’m an Iraqi, and they’ve destroyed my country, my city.”
Saddam destroyed the character of the person, now they’ve destroyed the country.”

Shadid’s stories offer a perspective into the sentiment of anti-spreading throughout Baghdad. These events ultimately damaged the relationship between the indigenous population, further igniting complications between the Arab World and the U.S.

*Managing Diversity in the Military: Research Perspectives from the Defense,* by Mickey R. Dansby, James B. Stewart, and Schuyler C. Webb provides historical background on intercultural training in the military. The articles in this book are a collection from scholars of diverse backgrounds that look at different models and approaches of military discipline and race. They offer strategies and suggestions for improving intercultural relations by examining the history of war and conflict.

In a collection of essays entitled, *What They Think of Us: International Perceptions of the United States Since 9/11,* by David Farber and a community of international writers. This collection discusses how global attitudes toward the U.S. have changed since 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This book specifically explores the longer lasting implications of U.S. military behavior in Iraq both during and after armed conflict. Farber also proposes various strategies for improving relations by increasing cultural understanding and respect.

In a short collection of scholarly essays analyzing various issues surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq entitled, *War and Border Crossings: Ethics When Cultures Clash,*

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Peter A. French examines the small clashes in cultural identity and how these differences become exaggerated. In particular, one essay, “Cross Cultural and Cross Generational Interactions,” discusses the fine line between building cultural bridges while trying to protect borders. This essay addresses the issues in Iraq, specifically during the post-battle phase of the war.

Anthony Paratkanis’ book, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, argues the same. In his book, he analyzes the war in Iraq and the communication between the two sides. He points out that this has been about more than just “bombs and bullets.” Paratkanis discusses President Bush’s political messages and how they contradict the behavior of the troops in Iraq. He says, “If you don’t win the hearts and minds of people, you can win the military war and lose the big war.”

Finally, there has been much theoretical dialogue about communication in a time of conflict. Samuel Huntington’s shocking book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the New World Order*, discusses various ideologies about the interaction and battle between cultures versus nations. His work, and its criticism, is used to explore issues of “West-East” relations. Edward Said's theories on orientalism and otherization are invaluable to the discussion of the impact on U.S. Relations with the Arab and Muslim World. Said argues that these divisions are created by the so-called West and further animosities that may already exist. As this thesis demonstrates, this is, in fact, the case.
Data

The data compiled for this research was mostly qualitative and collected between the years of 2006-2009. The data can be categorized into three different types. They are: military and government public documents, interviews, and media reports. This includes in-person interviews, transcripts of lectures, journal articles, court testimonies, newspaper articles, military reports, and government documents dated from 2003 to the present day.

I surveyed major national and international publications: The Washington Post, the New Yorker, the New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, and several others. I also used academic journal articles published by military personnel, anthropologists, and sociologists.

The qualitative data consists of interviews and surveys conducted with several key figures to explore the discussion on intercultural communication with the military. This includes interviews with both military and non-military personnel. In my research I conducted surveys soldiers of varying ranks from different departments in the military recently returning from Iraq. Their experiences led me to the conclusion that the training available to these soldiers is inadequate and in need of improvement.

In my time spent on the Marine Base in Quantico, Virginia, I was able to access various pamphlets, books, and media used during the training process prior to departure. These materials demonstrate the poor quality of the training, and how little attention is paid to cultural sensitivity.
I also conducted first-person interviews with Barak Salmoni, Deputy Director of the U.S. Marine Corps Center for Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL). Salmoni, who trained elements of the 1st Infantry Division and National Guard on operational culture in Iraq and elements of every deploying battalion, discussed the details of his trainings which consist of indigenous culture, mores, and Iraqi public sentiment as it impacted the war.

Another interview I conducted was with Gunnery Sergeant Jamal Baadani, head of the Middle East Cultural Outreach Program (MECOP), who provided insight on the small number of Arab Americans in the military. Despite the 4.5 million Arab Americans in the military, Marine Corps Recruiters report there are only 4,000 enlisted Arab Americans today. In his interview he discussed recruitment efforts within the military and what his department was doing to increase these efforts.

My interview with Dr. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, clarified the impact of these operations and their tactical approaches on the Arab American community as cultural matters were considered. The thesis also alludes to various interviews with government officials which were available to the public, including interviews with former Secretaries of Defense, former Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, speeches by President George W. Bush, and many more.

This data found that the pre-departure orientation for soldiers and military officials was largely absent of cultural and linguistic education. My research found that the deficiency in this information led to serious complications on the ground in Iraq. The
lack of cultural awareness limited the success of the military in Iraq, and finally
devastated the relationship between the U.S. and the Arab World.

In the final chapters of my thesis, I explore communication and international
relations theories by a variety of academic voices. I refer to large-scale polls conducted in
the Middle East by Zogby International and the Pew Study Group to more accurately
describe the views in the Arab and Muslim Worlds of the U.S.

Methodology

Using various theoretical approaches from the communication and international
schools of thought, I analyzed the damaged relationship between the U.S. and the
Arab/Muslim World. I used Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” theory to
demonstrate that the divide and ignorance in culture was indeed leading to a conflict of
ethnic and racial foundations. Edward Said’s response to Huntington is important in
understanding the stereotypes that exist in this war today and the orientalist roots
involved.

The notion of stereotypes is extended in Henri Tajfel’s approaches to social
identity. Specifically, his theories on group identification to maximize positive
distinctiveness. He explains that, “groups offer both identity (they tell us who we are) and
self-esteem (they make us feel good about ourselves).”¹¹ Tajfel’s outlook on stereotypes
and otherization is important to understanding the pre-conceived notions of both the
soldiers and the Iraqis in times of conflict.

Overall these theories help assess the quality of the war preparedness, and ultimately, soldiers’ ability to successfully carry out their missions.
CHAPTER 2
WHERE WE FAILED IN IRAQ

Many failures occurred in the years following the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The military operation did not consider cultural awareness into its preparation, creating a difficult post-battle operating environment. Peace-keeping Operations in Iraq have actually led to just the opposite: more conflict. American forces continue to face an increase in animosity among many Iraqis, while battling an already negative image of the U.S. military. The military presence has also greatly contributed to power imbalances in Iraq, and severely affected military operations in general.¹ The insignificant amount of cross-cultural preparation resulted in the severe mishandling of various incidents in this war. This chapter reviews the post-combat phase (OIF Phase IV) of the war, and further demonstrates the crucial need for a stronger sense of cross-cultural for all levels of military.

Immediately following the capture of Saddam Hussein, and the rhetoric which came as a result, several incidents were handled with disregard to the cultural norms of the Iraqi people. The looting of palace jewels and artifacts, the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, and even day-to-day civilian-soldier interaction, are examples of where the U.S. military has failed to represent the ideals of the government, and the reasons for going to war. Had the proper preparation been in place, lives, strategic flaws, and diplomatic degradation could have been avoided.

¹ William D. Wunderle, Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 3.
After the battle

After the attacks on The World Trade Center, the Bush Administration’s concerns about Iraq’s alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs intensified. Between the months of January-March 2003, the U.S. Military presence continued to grow in the Persian Gulf area. Despite efforts to resolve the conflict diplomatically, the U.S. invaded Iraq on the night of March 19, 2003. After a relatively quick victory and capture of Saddam Hussein, U.S. military personnel began to deal with post-war governance issues, and were left to fight a very different war: to “win the hearts and minds” of the local populations. This is not an easy battle for any army, and certainly not without the proper cultural mechanisms in place. This operation relied heavily on increased soldier-civilian interaction, and put these troops at the front-lines of the diplomatic discussions with Iraqi civilians.

Unfortunately, the conception of an exit-strategy was hasty, and little cultural research went into the decision-making. In a U.S. Army strategic study report, Colonel Anthony Acruri notes that the U.S. confused “Ba’athits” for “pro-Saddamists” and further conflated the anti-Saddam sentiment for a pro-U.S. stance. “The long-term implications of being ‘freed’ by ‘infidels’ were underappreciated….U.S. forces now occupied the nation.” The U.S. military no longer faced a war, but rather an occupation.

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As a result, they were faced with an insurgency that was preparing to fight back against this U.S. led occupation.

Little effort was directed toward understanding the intricacies of religion and politics within the various Iraqi sects. Power balances in the population were severely affected by misattributed authority. Tribes were disproportionately empowered, and others virtually ignored. In addition, politics of the region were dismissed. U.S. forces relied heavily on Kuwaiti translators resulting in a complicated clash of previous animosities.\(^4\) In a different case “one interpreter—who had access to intelligence about U.S. operations – lied about his background. The tip-off: The interpreter said he was from Suleimaniya in northern Iraq.” His dialect however was Kurdish.\(^5\)

In the days following the war there were a range of events, demonstrating the cultural deficiency of military behavior. The capture of Saddam offered little to help the image of the American Military that was now “occupying” the country. After the extravagant capture of Saddam (600 troops sweeping a 10 mile radius to find the former president),\(^6\) the victory was portrayed as an American victory, contradicting the political rhetoric, which emphasized an Iraqi democracy. As a symbol of defeat, President Bush

\(^4\) Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries*, 8.

\(^5\) Ibid.

was offered the fallen dictator’s pistol, which he mounted in a study next to the Oval Office, as a trophy of war.\footnote{7}{Anthony Shadid, \textit{Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War} (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005), 313.}

Another incident which incited anger throughout the Iraqi nation, and the Arab world, was the draping of an American flag over the face of a 60-foot statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. Iraqi’s attempted to drag down the statue for several hours, using a noose-around its neck. Marine’s eventually helped by setting a cable around a tank recovery vehicle, crushing two flights of stairs and a flower bed in the middle of the park. An account of the incident reports “A few minutes later, the Marines brought out an American flag…two of them climbed the statue and draped it over Saddam’s visage. A hush rolled through the crowd, and cheers became subdued.”\footnote{8}{Ibid., 125.} The gesture created a widespread resentment throughout the Arab World, and was seen as another occupation of Arab land by the west.\footnote{9}{Reuters,” U.S. Troops Drape Saddam Statue in American Flag,” Reuters, http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0409-06.htm (accessed January 2, 2009).} An Iraqi flag quickly replaced it, but perhaps not quickly enough to erase the damage that was already done.

Further civilian-soldier strife included looting of the various Baghdad palaces and museums, photos of soldiers bunking in the palaces, the burning of bodies for “hygienic purposes,” the use of dogs to search Iraqis, and uninitiated attacks on civilians. These
actions came to symbolize the chaos, which followed the American invasion and further damaged U.S. legitimacy. 10

These actions served as justification for the rise in anger and insurgency on the Iraqi side. In an account of Iraqi civilians during the aftermath of the war. Washington Post journalist, Anthony Shadid, reflects upon the days following Saddam’s capture, and the rise in tensions as a result. “Soon after Saddam’s capture, Leaflets were distributed at Friday prayers at Sunni Mosques, “The Disaster of the Occupation and the Duties of the Islamic Nation: The goal of the infidels, after stealing our wealth, is to remove us from our religion by force and all other means so that we become a lost nation without principle, making it easier for the Jews and Christians to humiliate us.” 11

This verifies that the tone throughout the country simply continued to be damaged by the presence of U.S. Soldiers, and their disregard for cultural sensitivity. The weeks following the invasion should have been handled with extreme delicacy, especially considering the unconventional warfare demonstrated in Afghanistan and the rise of Anti-Americanism throughout the world. This was a missed opportunity to strengthen the character of the American persona, and strengthen the diplomatic relations between the two countries. The lack of proper readiness diminished what positive attributes there were.

11 Shadid, Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War, 312.
Man and Soldier

With a reported nearly 100,000\textsuperscript{12} civilian deaths since the start of the war, it should not be surprising that U.S. soldiers have a negative relationship with Iraqi civilians. Shadid expands on this animosity. In a discussion with a thirty-eight-year-old Iraqi who describes the relationship as mysterious and unclear. He says, “They rid us of our repression, there’s no question about that. But we want to know how it turns out. Are they here for our sake? They said they came to save us. Now they have to prove it.” \textsuperscript{13} Not an uncommon sentiment, and unfortunately completely overlooked by U.S. forces and U.S. intelligence.

The military also failed to examine the nature of the Iraqi system of information transmission, causing lost opportunities in influencing public policy. In an article in the Joint Force Quarterly, they discussed a Marine who had just returned from Iraq, “We were focused on broadcast media and metrics. But this had no impact because Iraqis spread information through rumor. Instead of tapping into their networks, we should have visited their coffee shops.” The article further explained that, “The emphasis on force protection prevented Soldiers from visiting coffee shops and buying items on the economy. Soldiers and Marines were unable to establish one-to-one relationships with Iraqis, which are key to both intelligence collection and winning hearts and minds. A related issue is our squelching of Iraqi freedom of speech. Many members of the


\textsuperscript{13}Shadid, Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War, 125.
Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and Combined Joint Task Force 7 felt that anti-coalition and anti-American rhetoric was a threat to security and sought to stop its spread.\textsuperscript{14}

Furthermore, the regular daily interaction with civilians can be defined as abusive, and illustrates a lack in basic cultural communication. Debriefed marines reported several issues with vehement hand gestures, loud voices and Iraqi “tolerance for physical closeness.” Marines had to re-train themselves as to what was and was not threatening. “We had our fingers on the trigger all the time because they were yelling.” \textsuperscript{15}

Various cultural symbols were often confused and misinterpreted. At roadblocks specifically, there were a number of miscommunications. The American gesture for “stop” (arm straight, palm out) means welcome in Iraq, while the gesture for “go” means stop to Iraqis (arm straight, palm down).\textsuperscript{16} This lack of the knowledge of an essential cultural norm often led to casualties and unnecessary violence. A white flag, which in Western definitions is a means of surrender, led many Marines to assume a black flag was the opposite of surrender. As a result, many Shiites, who traditionally fly black flags at home as a religious symbol, were “identified as the enemy and shot at unnecessarily.”\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
In a 2004 interview, Mohamed Ghani, a seventy-six-year-old sculptor in the “occupied city,” tells the story of a man he knew whose wife had been searched by American soldiers. An act that “left the husband crying with shame.” Ghani said, “This man could do nothing, only cry, they destroyed his honor.”\textsuperscript{18} The sculptor’s stories, as captured by Shadid, continue to examine the civilian relationship and the theme that the Americans would not end the Saddam-era horrors, but would rather expand upon them. “He recalled another who struggled as soldiers tried to force him to the ground on a crowded street. He described an image of a soldier’s hand atop an Iraqi’s head, the Iraqi resisting, upset and he grew more emotional as he continued to speak. ‘They treat us like cowboys.. they use guns, they don’t respect us. They don’t know anything about the Iraqi character, the culture of Iraq, the history of Iraq. They know nothing. I’m a Baghdadi, I'm an Iraqi, and they’ve destroyed my country, my city. Saddam destroyed the character of the person, now they’ve destroyed the country.’”\textsuperscript{19} Stories like this are common in Iraq. They have become the legendary tales that spread about the “American Soldier” inciting a stronger insurgency. These events ultimately damaged the relationship between the indigenous population, further igniting complications between the Arab World and the U.S.

Of the most deteriorating incidents in U.S. foreign relations with Iraq during the war, was the discovery of prisoner cruelty at the Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq. In 2004, a

\textsuperscript{18} Shadid, \textit{Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War}, 138.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
story in The New Yorker exposed severe prisoner abuse by military personnel depicting images and testimonials from various military personnel. Reported misconduct, incidents of rape, civilian murder, abuse of the Quran, etc. shocked the global community and fueled the already existing anti-Americanism in the region. This abuse however, demonstrated that there was sufficient knowledge about the Arab and Muslim Culture. It was the exploitation of that information that served as a source for the types of abuse reported.

Details of the Abuse

Following the initial release of the article, a flood of stories appeared with detailed accounts and various interviews from generals, victims, and officers, revealing horrifying stories. The interviews and stories included examples of:

- Sexual abuse of minors (female and male),
- Urinating on Detainees,
- Jumping on a detainee’s leg (a limb already wounded by gunfire),
- Continuing by pounding detainee’s wounded leg with collapsible metal baton,
- Pouring phosphoric acid on detainees,
- Sodomization of detainees with batons, chemical lights and broom sticks,
- Tying ropes to the detainees’ legs or penises and dragging them across the floor,
- Exposing detainees to venomous snakes often resulting in death,

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- Feeding detainees meals served in toilets,
- Forcing detainees to pose for pictures in a naked human pyramid,
- Destruction of copies of the Quran,
- Riding detainees as donkeys.\(^{21}\)

While this is clearly abhorrent to any culture or religious background, the emphasis on nudity and sexual abuse is evident in this list. Arab modesty is a major facet in the Muslim and Arab cultures. Discussion of these abuses in the Arab World is not commonplace.

*The Washington Post* released interviews with various detainees depicting specific incidents in which torture was created based on cultural knowledge. In one specific incident, a detainee is asked to stand on a pile of food. Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh, (detainee no. 18170) testifies, “On the third day, after five o'clock, Mr. Graner came and took me to room Number 37, which is the shower room, and he started punishing me,” he said. “Then he brought a box of food and he made me stand on it with no clothing, except a blanket. Then a tall black soldier came and put electrical wires on my fingers and toes and on my penis, and I had a bag over my head.”\(^{22}\)

In the Arab culture, during demonstrations, it is not unlikely to see protesters step or stomp on flags. In Iraq when the statue of Saddam was toppled, Iraqis took their shoes


off and beat the statue to display their disappointment with the leader. Displaying the sole of your shoe to any person is considered rude, before entering a mosque, shoes must be removed. It is this cultural factoid idea that is exploited when forcing a detainee to stand on his food.\textsuperscript{23} To step on food, revered as a gift from god, and no less when a starving prisoner, is not simply an act of prisoner torture, but a well thought out method.

Another testimony demonstrates not the lack of cultural knowledge, but the lack of cultural sensitivity that led to the failure at Abu Ghraib. The military personnel, who tortured the victim below, clearly had enough knowledge of Islam and its values to engage in this type of behavior. Ameen Saeed Al-Sheik (detainee No. 151362) testified, “They stripped me naked. One of them told me he would rape me. He drew a picture of a woman to my back and makes me stand in shameful position holding my buttocks.” Al-Sheikh continues his testimony, with a bag over his head he was asked, “‘Do you pray to Allah?’ ‘I said yes. They said, '[Expletive] you. And [expletive] him.' One of them said, 'You are not getting out of here health[y]; you are getting out of here handicapped. And he said to me, 'Are you married?' I said, 'Yes.' They said, 'If your wife saw you like this, she will be disappointed.' One of them said, 'But if I saw her now she would not be disappointed now because I would rape her.'” He continued by stating that one soldier had ordered him to curse Islam while beating his already broken leg. “Because they started to hit my broken leg, I cursed my religion. They ordered me to thank Jesus that I'm alive.” While handcuffed to a bed the soldiers asked him, “‘Do you believe in

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{23} Martin Asser, “Bush Shoe-ing Worst Arab Insult,” \textit{British Broadcast Company}, December 15, 2008.}
anything?’ he said the soldier asked. I said to him, ‘I believe in Allah.’ So he said, ‘But I believe in torture and I will torture you.’”

The references to Allah and Jesus, the sanctity of this man’s wife, the excessive mention of sex, all allude to a definite familiarity with the culture. These methods of torture demonstrate a serious lack of cultural sensitivity.

*Culturally Tailored Torture*

A great deal of the torture exhibited at Abu Ghraib, demonstrates the expertise and cultural understanding of the Arab peoples. As one anthropologist noted, “Arab Islamic people value modesty as a means of minimizing sexual interests during the public routines of life and as symbolic submission to god.”

The over exploitation of sexual abuse in Abu Ghraib is evident in these methods of torture. This leads most anthropologists and social scientists to believe that, “the work of social scientists was probably involved in devising such culturally tailored torture.”

They are right. The incredibly controversial book, *The Arab Mind*, served as the foundation for much of the military’s pre-departure training and knowledge transfer about the Arab people. Unfortunately, Raphael Patai’s outdated book (1983) is based on entirely false assumptions of the region and the collective region of Arab people work.

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24 Higham and Stephens, *New Details of Prison Abuse Emerge.*


26 Ibid.
He amalgamates the behavior of people of the same linguistic background, uses largely negated stereotypes, and distorts the image of the Arab World.

In Hersh’s Abu Ghraib series in the *New Yorker*, he reported that Patai’s book “provided the intellectual backdrop for the torture and sexual abuse that took place at Abu Ghraib.” In the article, an unnamed source explained that, *The Arab Mind*, was used by the Pentagon to dictate Arab behavior, he wrote, “Two themes predominated: One, that Arabs only understand force, and, two, that the biggest weakness of Arabs is shame and humiliation.”

Patai’s book features a five-part chapter on the realm of sex, describing Arab repression and honor in a demeaning and misleading interpretation about the region’s traditional beliefs. He writes, “Parents and other authority figures imbue the Arab child with the notion of the sinfulness of sex, and the culture as a whole surrounds the individual with an atmosphere which constantly reminds him of the same subject.” His analysis of the Arab sexual character is both deceiving and orientalist.

The use of this book is made more evident by the fact that in the preface of the 2002 edition, there is a forward by retired Army Colonel Norvell B Atkine, in which he suggests that despite its age of over 30 years, the ideas have not aged at all. Atkine uses the book in his own pre-deployment trainings at the John F Kennedy Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC.

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Not everyone is as laudatory. In his review of the book, Brian Whitaker argues that, “In some ways, the book's appeal to the military is easy to understand, because it gives a superficially coherent view of the Arab enemy and their supposed personality defects. It is also readily digestible, uncomplicated by nuances and caveats, and has lots of juicy quotes, a generous helping of sex, and no academic jargon.” 29 Now however, the book has been entirely dismissed from the academic arena, and used at Georgetown University for anthropology students to better understand “an example of bad, biased social science.”30

In the case of Abu Ghraib, it was not the lack of knowledge about the systems and belief of the people that derailed U.S. military efforts. It was rather the lack of cultural sensitivity. Had the proper cultural education been in place before deployment, methods of interrogation and prisoner upkeep would have been properly addressed. Cultural training should include lessons on how to effectively communicate and negotiate information without exploiting the Arab and Muslim culture. The soldiers seemingly had an adequate amount of regional expertise, but they lacked cultural sensitivity. Their actions in the post combat phase of the war, demonstrated an obvious lack of cultural substance on the Iraqi people and culture. The abuse of information at Abu Ghraib further demonstrates limited guidance on cultural interactions. More importantly, they display

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30 Ibid.
ignorance about the influence of their actions on the ability to successfully complete the U.S. political mission in Iraq.

Clearly the amount of work and research that was devoted to understanding Iraq and its intricacies were limited. In the 1991 Gulf War under George H. W. Bush’s administration, the capture of Saddam was entirely avoided because of these very intricacies. One of the concerns for ending the war was a fear that a “post-Saddam Iraq could dissolve into chaos.” Fear of civil strife between Sunni Muslims, the majority but under-represented Shiites, and the Kurds would, and open influence from neighboring Iran, Turkey and Syria was one of the many concerns. Surprisingly, twelve years later, the administration of George W. Bush, failed to anticipate those same issues, and prepare the troops accordingly.  

Events in Iraq have served as a wakeup call to the U.S. government about its military’s insufficient knowledge of its adversary. Understanding this type of unconventional warfare and enemy is key not only the U.S.’ ability to complete its mission, but to diplomatic efforts between the regions in general.

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31 Copson, The Iraq War: Background and Issues, 43.
CHAPTER 3
PRE-DEPLOYMENT TRAINING

Before the Iraq war, there were a number of training methods in place for soldiers prior to departure to Iraq. Those trainings however, were often one-dimensional and failed to address the intricacies of the various Iraqi culture and behavior of Iraqi civilians. While there may not always be sufficient time for such thorough preparedness, general military training should address the importance of cultural thinking as it relates to interaction and negotiation during combat.

While there has been significant advancement of preparation courses for soldiers since the initial invasion of Iraq, the curriculum still lacks the ability to properly prepare soldiers for effective civilian-communication in a time of war. The necessity for this training is critical to improve communications with the indigenous population. Better training additionally facilitates the success of military operations in foreign lands. The U.S. military has faced too many obstacles in Iraq stemming from cultural misunderstanding. After various incidents of misconduct, the U.S. government has realized the need to improve communication efforts between U.S. Forces and Iraqis. As a result, some more expansive cultural training has been adopted.

In early 2005, the U.S. government called upon necessary change for instruction of operational forces in Iraq. The Defense Department issued its Defense Transformation Language Roadmap aiming to “sharpen foreign language skills within the military, with more language professionals trained to comprehend, read and converse in more world
languages and at higher proficiency levels than in the past.”¹ This Roadmap, along with several other DOD Directives, seek to strengthen the pre-deployment trainings that expand language and the cultural aptitude of the troops.

However, restraining these initiatives is the notion that mandated courses are not constructed to make soldiers more culturally sensitive, but rather teach them the skills necessary only to completing their tasks. As Barak Salmoni, Deputy Director of the U.S. Marine Corps Center for Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL), a department at the U.S. Marine headquarters in Quantico, Virginia, explains, “The focus shifted from not offending people (a negative incentive) to grasping local human dynamics in order to accomplish the mission (a positive incentive). Thus, culture knowledge—knowledge applied toward achieving mission goals—became an element of combat power and a force multiplier.”² Salmoni argues that whether his troops are culturally sensitive or not is irrelevant, only that they have enough knowledge to complete the mission of the U.S. Military. These mandates demanding change have the ability to improve intercultural awareness for future soldiers, offering some of the necessary tools to complete their missions. Cultural sensitivity is not considered a necessary tool.

The damage may already be done. Despite the military’s earnestness in implementing new DOD mandates, soldiers received little to no cultural training prior to these new standards. Guidance on interactions with Iraqis was limited prior to departure.


Before Iraq

One soldier recalls that his pre-deployment cultural training consisted of a three-hour class and a pamphlet. Joseph Hatcher explains that he learned things like, “where [Iraq is] on a map, because you’d be surprised how many people don’t know that.” The only language training he received was a “hand-out flip-book type flyer which was how to say things like ‘go down on your hands and knees’ and ‘don’t resist’.” Hatcher served for just over a year in Dawr, Iraq from February ’04- March ’05. He noted that they used very little language at all in the house raids, explaining that the act was self-explanatory. He adds, “We didn’t learn how to make any kind of conversation.”

Another soldier points out that often times there is little time allotted for pre-deployment training. In the case of one soldier it was a simple matter of choice. The excessive number of soldiers deploying to Iraq makes it difficult to assign individual face-to-face training. While he agrees that cultural training could be more effective if more time was devoted to it, he also said that the “average soldier will not read a book.” He explained that some units that have great success have a reading program for that specific area. This however, “takes time and time is precious.” He continued by adding, “If given the opportunity to read a book or spend that time with my family, I will choose

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4 Ibid.
my family because you cannot get that back, especially before a year-long deployment.”  

Stories like these are proof that cultural mechanisms must be in place prior to the sudden call for war.

A commander from the 3rd Infantry Division expressed his need for this training. “I had perfect situational awareness. What I lacked was cultural awareness. I knew where every enemy tank was dug in on the outskirts of Talil. Only problem was, my soldiers had to fight fanatics charging on foot or in Picupls and firing AK47s and RPGs. Great technical intelligence, wrong enemy.”  

Soldiers should have the ability to function in a foreign environment, and have a stronger geographical and regional understanding of the world despite the element of a surprise war.

Language

Language and culture training are not standardized across military departments. Even interdepartmentally, many training locations have varying standards of education. In its most advanced examples, soldiers are still not receiving enough pre-departure language training. Language courses in the Marine Corps range anywhere from 6-12 hours depending on your assignment. Salmoni explains that ground-ops and military transition team will receive the most, a full 12 hours. Non-ground units may receive 3-6.

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5 Phone interview with “Mark” Currently a student at the Command and General Staff College. Previously served on the Joint Staff working Iraq Policy in Washington, D.C. and trained units deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan prior to that assignment.

Learning methods include handouts, slide shows, exercises, and fact cards, which vary according to post. The cards contain common phrases, for checkpoints, house raids etc.  

Because 12 hours is inadequate in terms of creating the language skills necessary to communicate in a hostile environment, it is common for troops to hire local translators abroad. This results in issues with inaccuracy, loyalty and language power. Many U.S. and local interpreters speak poor Arabic, because “the people doing the hiring didn’t speak the language.” The translator for the articulate Gen. Rodriguez made him sound like an eighth grader. This can be problematic for negotiation and matters of delicacy.  

Language translation plays a crucial role in the completion of work and can critically influence the outcomes of military operations. “Expert translators must have opportunities to grasp the socio-cultural context of the organizational setting, to learn the strategic importance of the discourse being translated.” Not only must the translator be familiar with both language, they should also be familiar with both cultures: the Arab World and the U.S. Military.  

Developing necessary language skills, especially in a language as challenging as Arabic, requires several year of disciplined study and may not be a practical goal in pre-war situations. However, a serious increase in officers who are proficient in Arabic is necessary.  

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7 Barak Salmoni, interview by author, Quantico, VA, December 4, 2006.  


Cultural training however, cannot be limited to just officers. Successful counterinsurgency operations depend heavily on through understanding of the local culture. Lt. Col. William Wunderle (U.S. Army), a political military planner with responsibility for Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority, argues that “Cultural awareness is not currently included as part of foreign language training. Cultural training provided to soldiers prior to deployment tends to be overly simplistic, typically focusing on lists of do’s and don’ts without providing a context for cultural understanding.”\(^\text{10}\) He explains that because conventional war fighting is the main focus of the military, pre-deployment training tends to focus more on conventional operations, rather than cultural operations.

In research compiled by the U.S. Marine Corps, a restructure of the courses should require soldiers to understand and answer the following questions:

- What is my adversary thinking and why?
- What are my friends thinking and why?
- What will they do if I take action X and why?
- How are cultural factors influencing my operations?
- How can I make others do what I want them to do?\(^\text{11}\)


\(^{11}\) Ibid.
In the case of the Marine Corps, cultural training currently includes three levels of proficiency. Each level features segments about Islam, History, the Arab culture, Cross Cultural Communication and Tactical Application. They are also instructed on the ideal response to various situations. The components of the course are primarily cultural factoids, with little mention of cultural sensitivity. The soldiers are taught the obvious do’s-and-don’ts about Iraqi life: How to conduct house raids without offending the man of the house, how to search a woman (you don’t), how to shake a hand, how to have an argument, how to understand the culture and be able to recognize irregularities. They learn that “pissed off Iraqis” (POIs) are ok, because “it’s ok to be pissed off in this environment.”

Instructors of Arab descent and often native-Iraqis will serve as actors in a simulated Iraqi town and allow soldiers to practice their newly acquired skills. These instructors are extremely valuable to instruction, particularly during “theatre immersions.” From house raids and checkpoints, to day-to-day interaction with civilians and ambushes, the soldiers are exposed to what a typical day in Iraq may look like. Soldiers are videotaped and later surveyed with evaluations by their instructors. Soldiers prepare for the scenario of suicide bombings, skirmishes, riots, and cultural clashes by spending weeks of war gaming at various training centers all over the world. The

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12 Salmoni, interview.

National Training Center at Fort Irwin California, the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany are the three largest participants.

Example scenarios include an Iraqi battalion commander who quarreled angrily with his Iraqi police counterpart, Iraqi troops that roughed up a detainee and an Iraqi crowd irate at the troops who had conducted a surprise raid.”¹⁴ These centers emphasize cultural challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan to make soldiers more confident in confronting the cross-cultural challenges they face on the battlefield.¹⁵

Conversely, these instructors cannot articulate the needs and frustrations of Iraqis who have lived under the turmoil of several wars, brutal regimes, a devastating sanction, and probably the loss of many close friends and relatives. Teaching cultural understanding, as well as historical significance is not easy.

Much like the Marines, the Army has three training centers for units heading to Iraq. Mission Rehearsal Exercises are focused rotations that developed out of our experience in Bosnia and Kosovo where the U.S. experienced initial problems during peacekeeping operations. The rotations are tailored to the unit’s needs and replicate the conditions in Iraq, bringing in hundreds of Iraqi Americans to role play in mock villages.¹⁶


In some cases, soldiers have the opportunity for further on-site training in Jordan upon arrival into the Middle East, and later in Iraq. Other methods of training include video games specifically tailored to the area of deployment. This software includes language and cultural measurement as well as combat training.

Unfortunately, the time allowed for the more extensive trainings are few. While there is a desire to train every soldier before deployment, the reality is that these exercises are offered only in ideal circumstances. It can be difficult to meet the student/instructor demand because of limitations on resources and knowledge of this part of the world. There is no doubt that inadequate training leads to misperceptions that can complicate operations.

In one scenario, Marines were instructed that “Muslims were highly pious and prayed five times a day, but lost respect for Iraqis when they found a brewery in Baghdad and men with mistresses.”\(^{17}\) In fact there are few pious Muslims in Baghdad and Iraq has been a secular country for nearly six decades.

In an interview with Dr. Barak Salomi, who trained elements of the 1st Infantry Division and National Guard on operational culture in Iraq and elements of every deploying battalion, he explained that these trainings can be lost on troops that are simply distracted in the idea of going to war. In his trainings, Salomi focused on issues of indigenous culture, mores, and Iraqi public sentiment as it impacted the war, but despite

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\(^{16}\) Mark C. Quander, Interview by author, Washington DC, December 6, 2008.

his efforts he believes, “Marines are trained, but they don’t always understand their training.”\textsuperscript{18}

This is why trainings of certain regions should not simply occur because of war. Having specialized officers in various cultures of the world, prior to invasion or political strife is necessary. As one officer points out, “If we train the force for Iraq and Afghanistan, what happens when the military needs to send units on a humanitarian mission to Thailand or Liberia? These are two very different places.”\textsuperscript{19} The U.S. Military has a uniquely placed itself in 140 of the worlds’ 191 countries. The U.S. responds to situations everywhere in the world, thus should seek to specialize in all regions of the world. More importantly, the U.S. must be prepared for deployment at anytime.

\textit{Moving Forward}

As the war continued, the realization that cultural attributes were causing failures on the ground in Iraq caused the Department of Defense to make strides to improve the effort to reconstruct training. The need for enhanced cultural awareness instruction is acknowledged but severely underestimated by the Pentagon. The events at Abu Ghraib forced politicians to recognize the severity of the situation. In October 2004, Secretary of Defense, Donald H. Rumsfeld released a memo stating “foreign language skill and regional and cultural expertise are essential enabling capabilities for DOD activities in the

\textsuperscript{18} Saloni, interview.

\textsuperscript{19} Quander, interview.
transition to and from hostilities.” While there has been acknowledgment, the change is slow to come. The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap also seeks to ensure the same development process among military education. The Roadmap seeks to “significantly improve organic capability in emerging languages and dialects, a greater competence and regional area skills in those languages and dialects, and a surge capability to rapidly expand its language.” The language transformation goals are as follows:

1. Create foundational language and cultural expertise in the officer, civilian, and enlisted ranks for both Active and Reserve Components.

2. Create the capacity to surge language and cultural resources beyond these foundational and in-house capabilities.

3. Establish a cadre of language specialists possessing a level 3/3/3 ability (reading/listening/speaking ability).

4. Establish a process to track the accession, separation and promotion rates of language professionals and Foreign Area Officers (FAOs).

These goals are an excellent foundation to the task at hand, but fulfilling the requirements may take a lot more time than Iraq has. The requirement for a Foreign Area Officers (FAO) Program is a particularly important one, as it creates regional experts for

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22 Ibid.
all parts of the world. These officers will serve as cultural experts who will often be attached to a fleet commander and “provide cultural expertise to assist with relations with the fleet commander’s area of responsibility.” These officers will provide DOD with knowledge-superior military activity. One Major exclaims his appreciation of the FAOs, saying his presence has been invaluable. “We ought to have one of these guys assigned to every [regional] commander in Iraq,” says Col. John Bayer, chief of staff for Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, the commander of U.S. forces in the northern third of the country. “I’d love to say 'assign me 100 of these guys.'”

Unfortunately, comprehensive cultural training is only offered to a few. The Navy plans to graduate 25 FAOs beginning in the summer of 2007 and increase to 50 by 2009. Some Units will make use of their “Cultural Ambassadors” or Arab American soldiers for cultural expertise. But these too are a limited number.

In addition to higher standards for cultural training immediately prior to deployment, there is currently a framework in place to extend cultural training to military academies and universities at an earlier stage of the soldier’s career. Overall it seems that there is much sentiment out of Washington, specifically following the incidents at Abu Ghraib, reflecting the need for leaders to prioritize foreign language and regional expertise requirements. This would ensure that combat forces deploy with the ability to

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24 Jaffe, "In Iraq, One officer Uses Cultural Skills to Fight Insurgents."
effectively communicate with local and government officials and coalition partners during war.

Several challenges face this new training. One challenge is that “it’s not enough for us to just know Arab Culture. We need to know the dynamics of Iraq today, and not yesterday.” Salmoni explains that the various differences between provinces can be crucially different in some aspects. Finding instructors who are both skilled and credible is another difficulty. Some instructors are external from the Arab American and Arab communities; others are cultural experts who have returned from a tour of duty in the area.

Overall the sentiment from Washington appears to understand the extent of the necessity for the improvement of the training. A 2006 Directive entitled “Language and Expertise Regional Planning” by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3126-01 requires “Combatant Commanders (COCOM) and supporting commanders to ensure foreign language and regional expertise capability requirements are integrated into all crisis, contingency and security cooperation plans, and day-to-day manning needs in support of military operations. COCOMs and force providers must consider all possible sourcing solutions from available DOD resources to include Active, Reserve, National Guard, contractor services, multi-language tools, allied/coalition partners, government civilians, and military retirees in order to meet the war fighter

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25 Salmoni, interview.
In 2006, the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) argued that as the nation’s largest employer, the DOD should require a much higher level of proficiency across the board. In addition, the QDR found that “developing broader linguistic capability and cultural understanding is critical to prevail in the long war and to meet 21st century challenges.” The review suggested that DOD “dramatically increase the number of personnel proficient in key languages such as Arabic, Farsi and Chinese and make these languages available at all levels of action and decision – from the strategic to the tactical.” The QDR concluded that “The Department must foster a level of understanding and cultural intelligence about the Middle East and Asia comparable to that developed about the Soviet Union during the Cold War.”

As this chapter points out there was a fleeting moment in 2006 which demonstrated a genuine desire in Washington for stronger cultural training, specifically after the incidents at Abu Ghraib, but it seems that talk of improvement has died down. Initial suggestions from the government to enhance the level of training were organized and had the potential to alleviate tensions between the U.S. military and Iraqi civilians. The momentum, however, was lost and efforts seem to have receded.

The evidence in the current training demonstrates that not only are the present systems of training inadequate, but also that the post-op briefing for cultural and language use simply does not exist on a standardized level. The cultural propensity of the returning

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troops should be evaluated in a more thorough process. These soldiers can best evaluate the situation in Iraq and what types of language and cultural skills are necessary.

In 2006 a bipartisan Iraq Study Group was formed to review the situation on the ground and propose strategies for the way forward. After thorough review with military officers, regional experts and high-level government officials, the group concluded that, “As redeployment proceeds, military leaders should emphasize training and education of forces that have returned to the United States in order to restore the full force of combat capability.”

Training should be restructured to match the needs of those soldiers returning from Iraq. The current pre-departure methods in place do little to aid the success of the military in Iraq. The next chapter offers a more strategic approach to restructuring cultural training and offers suggestions for improving the training and evaluation process.

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CHAPTER 4
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Defense Department has recognized that part of its research and development efforts to support counterinsurgency operations must be oriented toward the people involved in this type of war; and the DOD has called on the types of scientists – anthropologists, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, economists—whose professional orientation to human behavior would enable them to make useful contributions in this area. ¹

– DOD Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency, 1965

Never has it been more important to fully understand our adversaries in a time of war, in order to be successful. Clearly the current system of training is inadequate for today’s war, because these soldiers are no longer simply engaging in conventional warfare and declaring victory. They are now restructuring civil society, fixing economies, and determining political orders.

There is a lot that can be done to improve the current methods of training for the military. The Department of Defense has issued a few directives which provide guidelines for instruction reform. Other think tanks have also sought to address the issue of war strategy and how this can be improved to put the soldiers in a better situation on the ground. This chapter reviews these past frameworks as well as investigates the efforts of other nations and offers suggestions for improvement across the board.

DOD assessments and the Iraq Study Group both recognized the importance language and culture play in operations. The *Iraq Study Group Report* recommends that cabinet leaders redirect their focus to fostering professional language proficiency and cultural training, in general and specifically for U.S. officers and personnel deploying to Iraq.²

It is important for U.S. soldiers to help foster a stronger political and cultural relationship with the Arab world. This includes engaging various types of cultural diplomacy as well as educational preparation to develop the necessary understanding about the region. More importantly, U.S. Soldiers should simply have a stronger knowledge and readiness for all areas of the world. Soldiers should be assigned a region to specialize in well in advance to the need for war.

In order to prepare these soldiers adequately, several steps must be taken. The following are suggestions for restructuring these preparations. I have divided these suggestions into two different approaches. The first incorporates the learning of culture as a whole, and the second suggests improvements for specific language and regional studies. Finally this chapter suggests the inclusion of Americans of Muslims and Arab descent as a valuable resource to the learning process.

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Since the invasion of Iraq, there has been a slightly more ambitious approach to prepare the departing soldiers for cultural immersion in Iraq. These trainings however, teach the soldiers cultural factoids about the country rather than how to understand culture in Iraq. What these trainings should strive to do is to prepare the military for any foreign culture. The education should emphasize how to quickly adjust in all foreign environments, and how to quickly recognize cultural differences. This will eliminate the need to enforce alien ideas and methodologies upon foreign communities, who may not take well to this imposition. This type of training should be incorporated early on in a soldier’s training, as early as physical conditioning and weapon training occurs.

More important than useless trivia about a culture, soldiers require cultural competence to support their operations, the military needs soldiers who can “deal with a diversity of peoples and cultures, tolerate ambiguity, take initiative, and ask questions.” Soldiers should be able to readily identify various stages of culture shock, and adjust to these conditions without risking their ability to complete their missions.

This is the method that has been adopted by the Australian Defence Force. Shortly after the war began, the Australian Department of Defence issued a new type of training doctrine. This would refocus training to a more theoretical driven approach, providing

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trainees with the “broader understanding of cultural variation.” The Australian approach was to model cultural training on research done in the business community. They incorporated the Hofstede Model to enhance generic intercultural skills. This method, developed by Geert Hofstede, seeks to alter the underlying value-system and effect long-term increase in cultural understanding.

Another method of recent success is William Wunderle’s idea of categorizing cultural education. He argues that it is important to understand who should receive what level of training. Because military personnel have different responsibilities, Wunderle suggests the following categories for level of instruction:

**Cultural Consideration** ("How and Why") is the incorporation of generic cultural concepts in common military training—knowing how and why to study culture and where to find cultural factors and expertise.

**Cultural Knowledge** (Specific Training) is exposure to the recent history of a target culture. It includes basic cultural issues such as significant groups, actors, leaders, and dynamics, as well as cultural niceties and survival language skills.

**Cultural Understanding** (Advanced Training) refers to a deeper awareness of the specific culture that allows general insight into thought processes, motivating factors, and other issues that directly support the military decision-making process.

**Cultural Competence** (Decision-making and Cultural Intelligence) is the fusion of cultural understanding with cultural intelligence that allows focused insight into military planning and decision-making for current and future

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military operations. Cultural competence implies insight into the intentions of specific actors and groups.\textsuperscript{5}

While he points out that no single solution should be applied to all cultures, these categories are guidelines to military taxonomy. The idea of inserting cultural competence values into every day military training is important for short-term and long-term deployments, and will help the soldiers in any kind of cross-cultural situation.

\textit{Area Specific}

As a compliment to the more general studies of communicating with international audiences, a focused study observing the cultural and social norms of all regions should be administered to all soldiers, not simply high ranking officers. Military leadership should designate incoming soldiers to a region of the world, and consistently educate them in various languages, customs, religions, etc. Restructuring the organization of the military departments to assigned regions of the world, would provide many more culture/language experts.

In compliance with the guidelines above, different ranking officers should be evaluated with different rating systems to identify the level of language and culture they receive before earning the rank’s responsibilities. Cultural immersions can include more advanced courses abroad in the field. More opportunities should be available for soldiers who are based in foreign countries to study cultures and languages while abroad, and build personal relationships with indigenous peoples of the respective populations.

\textsuperscript{5} William D. Wunderle, \textit{Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries} (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 61.
One of the most effective uses of regional experts is the expansion of Foreign Area Officers in the force. These officers tend to fill positions which require the “application of foreign area expertise, political-military awareness, foreign language proficiency, and professional military knowledge and experience with military activities having an economic, social, cultural, or political impact.” FAO’s serve as attaches; security assistance officers; political-military operations, plans, and policy officers; political-military intelligence staff officers; liaison officers to foreign military organizations; and service school instructors.\(^6\) The military has slightly increased the number of Foreign Action Officers, but this number is still low. Increasing this number would be instrumental in creating more than just experts, but rather new instructors who can educate commanders and staff when the time for deployment comes.

Another way to incorporate more expert knowledge into the military would be to encourage assistance from the State Department. DOS personnel is trained and stationed in all regions of the world, making them key in the ability to train U.S. military on sudden deployment. Leveraging the assistance of embassies in planning military operations would ensure that cultural considerations are taken into account. Issues of DOD and DOS collaboration would arise; however, this seems to be an untapped resource, invaluable to the troops.

Encouraging interdepartmental relations would eventually lead to the creation of a government wide accountability system in which the various cultural and language

institutes throughout the system can combine forces to create a well-balanced curriculum. Joining forces would broaden the ability to realistically assess the needs of American officers abroad.

Arab Americans

As a “melting pot” country, the U.S. has access to regional experts for nearly every nation in the world. Americans of most ethnic backgrounds are available and are the most resourceful tool for the military to learn and understand foreign cultures. There should be a more serious effort on the part of the military to reach out and communicate with the Arab and Muslim American Community.

In 2007, The Middle East Cultural Outreach Program (MECOP) was launched to provide cultural and religious outreach to Muslim and Arab Communities across the United States. The program “provide[s] educational support to Marine Corps Recruiters about Arab and Muslim Americans by building a bridge between the two.”

Heading the program is, Gunnery Sergeant Jamal Baadani, an Egyptian-Born Yemeni-American. He questions why, despite the 400,000 Arab Americans in Michigan, Marine Corps Recruiters were not able to recruit any Arab Americans this last year. “The recruiter,” he said, “has no idea how to get into the community.” This can be difficult considering U.S. policy toward the Middle East, but according to Baadani, there are over 3,000 enlisted Arab Americans today, so it can and should be done.

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Soldiers of Arab American descent are able to easily communicate using both the language and the culture to navigate through foreign terrain. They learn to use their background and heritage to maneuver through the streets of Iraq. “It was easy for us to meet with the locals and coordinate dinner meetings so that our military counterparts could get a feel for locals,” said Baadani.

Serving in Yemen in 2006, Baadani was the only American of Arab Ancestry serving in his unit. Baadani explained that his bicultural upbringing served as an important asset during his tour. Information was easier to obtain, locals became more willing to cooperate, and even befriend the soldiers. His “brown skin” put locals at ease, allowing his fellow Marines and locals the opportunity to interact and understand each other. “We all have stereotypes,” he explained, “both them and us.”

He was also the only Arabic speaker for his unit. A typical unit can vary between 10-60 soldiers, and he was only man with cultural knowledge of the area. The unit, he said, was short handed. “If I could have had 5 more guys like me, it would have been perfect,” he said. But language is not enough. “What you need is a cultural understanding of the environment, and some things can’t be taught, they can only be lived.”

According to Baadani, “translators are easy to find, Arabs line up to get paid the fees of a translator during a time of war. But cultural knowledge is not for hire. This is why it is important to have Arab American and Muslim Americans in the military. I know how to talk to these guys, and those guys,” so making them talk to each other was not a challenge.” Baadani helped facilitate various dinners and luncheons in the homes of
the locals for this exchange of culture. “In [the Arab] culture everything is done over food,” said Baadani.

Having Muslim and Arab Americans as resources for both the military and the government is key to limiting stereotyping and otherization. Specifically in a post-9/11 world, Arab Americans want to participate in this facilitation of bridging the gap. In addition to the tragedy of an attack on their nation, this community also suffered a new sense of isolation and confusion. This led to the redefinition of this persona and the affiliation with the Arab and Muslim world.

In the U.S. State Department’s NEA Bureau, only a handful of employees speak Arabic aside from Alberto Fernandez, and even then he lacks the cultural intimacy that Arab Americans nurture with their constant familiarity with the region. Arab Americans who apply for work in the State Department or other inter government agencies are often denied because of their close ties/connections to the Arab World. Arab Americans can and should play a large role in the aftermath of September 11th, leading the struggle to protect civil liberties, and bridging the growing gap between the U.S. and the Arab world. They serve as ambassadors not only on an individual level, but on a public level as well. *The Iraq Study Group*, reported recently that of the 1,000 employees in the American Embassy in Iraq, only 33 speak Arabic, 6 of them fluently.  

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been conducted on troops returning from Iraq demonstrating a lack in cultural understanding. Unfortunately these reviews have not been standardized, and therefore the information being collected does not provide a large enough sample to promote military restructuring. Having a clearer and more succinct evaluation of the soldiers would offer specific guidance on advancing the educational system within the military.

Clearly there are several areas which can be advanced. The type of training which we conduct and the emphasis on cultural knowledge in place of solely area studies, will help increase the soldiers’ cultural aptitude on a global level. This will allow soldiers to function under any cultural environment.
CHAPTER 5
IMPACT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ON U.S./ARAB RELATIONS

Nearly two decades ago Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” shocked the world when he asserted that the wars of the world would no longer be territorial but rather “civilizational” because of differences in cultural values and behavior. He argued that, “The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.”¹

Now his theories no longer stun the world, as many have adopted them as their own. A war of culture has grown, quite possibly, out of his own theorizations. Huntington’s theories argue that, “Over the centuries differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts,”² Not surprisingly, these differences among civilizations continue to create the conflicts we face in Iraq today.

Huntington’s over generalizations and stereotypes of the Muslim and Arab World have come to be a common rhetoric heard in the academic world. While his predictions of future cultural clashes may have been true, his neglect of the individuality of each person in a social community created more conflict. His ideas were deemed orientalist by


²Ibid., 160.
many, and their outcome continues to demonstrate this. The clash in Iraq that was felt on both sides of the spectrum was created by the very rhetoric that Huntington according to cultural critic Edward Said.

Said explains this by describing Huntington’s failures to examine the “internal dynamics and plurality of every civilization, or for the fact that the major contest in most modern cultures concerns the definition or interpretation of each culture, or for the unattractive possibility that a great deal of demagogy and downright ignorance is involved in presuming to speak for a whole religion or civilization.”

The catastrophic incidents with the U.S. Military in the post-combat phase of the war are a key testament to a severe clash of ignorance. The relationship between the soldiers and Iraqis emulates the predictions that Huntington created. “The interactions among peoples of different civilizations enhance the civilization-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history.” Yet these clashes were a result of pre-conceived notions and stereotypes that were ingraned on both sides of the battle. Lack of familiarity with the region, the religion, the cultural norms, the do’s and don’t do’s created a harsh environment which continues to breed hostility.

Cultural differences played a considerable role in the initial reasons for invading Iraq, but the major inability to communicate in the post-conflict relations grew out of

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4 Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 158.
ignorance. The lack of understanding about cultural norms and adaptability now continue
to damage the already weak relationship between the U.S. and the Arab World. For each
side, the actions of the other throughout the war, continue to justify their anger and
discomfort with the “other” and ironically, each side continues to wonder, “why they still
hate us.”

This chapter discusses the “clash of civilizations” that is heightened by the
military occupation. As a result of ill preparedness, prejudice has elevated to hostile
terms. In this section, I explore the impact on the diplomatic relationship between the
U.S. and the Arab World, and specifically the lasting effects on Americans as the
insurgency continues to grow in conflict. By examining various communications and
international relations theories, I will analyze these relationships and how they have lead
to a “clash of ignorance.”

The “Arab Street”

The war in Iraq and the various cultural incidents that have been described in this
thesis, not only harm the ability of the soldiers to complete their tasks but also have an
adverse effect on U.S. relations with the Arab region. While many Arab and Muslim
nations may have politically supported the call for war by Washington, little support was
evident in public opinion throughout the region.

According to press reports there were, “Anti-U.S. demonstrations, of varying
sizes, in Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Sudan on January 23 2003.” 5 These

5 Shirine Hunter, The Impact of War with Iraq on U.S. Relations with Islamic World (Washington,
DC Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2003).
not only included popular demonstrations but varying other acts of protests. Rallies in this part of the world commonly featured U.S. flag burning, boycotting of popular American franchises, e.g. McDonalds, Starbucks etc., and a decreased tolerance for Americans as a people. This dissent led to the creation of a negative image of the U.S., making the fight that much more difficult for the U.S. military. This coincided with the war and the post-battle that was to come. While this was certainly not the case of every Arab in the region, this radical voice was the voice most clearly heard in around the world.

The U.S.-led military operation, deemed illegitimate by most Arabs and Muslims, was quickly compared to the Israeli occupation in Palestine. The role of the U.S. in Middle East peacemaking has been a significant factor in the rise of anti-Americanism in the Arab and Muslim Worlds. Adding to this sentiment was the invasion of Iraq with no convincing proof of chemical-biological weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. was late to justify their means, handled the post battle phase poorly, and led to the death and destruction of a nation on considerable scale.

Parallel to this, the American view of “The Arab Street” was just as damaged. According to propaganda expert Nancy Snow, “Millions of Americans would hear or read about where terrorism flourished, danger lurked around every corner, and religious and political fanaticism were the norm. The way it is often presented, the Arab street

6 Ibid.
could not possibly produce people with a healthy attitude toward the United States.”

This was the case on both sides.

This cyclical pattern of communication and depictions of the “other,” led to the overall demise of any communication efforts to come. Soldiers arriving in Iraq are immediately met with hostility. The connotation of war itself and the sentiment associated with it is not welcoming. Prior political relations with the U.S. and economic sanctions on Iraq were disruptive to the communication. Stereotypical perceptions Iraqis hold of Americans which is wide-spread in Iraq was also significantly damaging to efforts to build rapport.

Further complicating matters, U.S. soldiers had their own assumptions about the characteristics and behavior of Iraqis or Arabs in general. This stems from orientalist generalizations that have saturated American media for decades. Both sides entered the war fighting a much larger war than is obvious: a communication war. Within each group, there is an obvious exaggeration of the differences between the two groups: the in-group and the “other” group (the out-group). Henri Tajfel’s social identity theory explains that by stereotyping and categorizing, differences between groups are exaggerated. The variable of stereotyping is evident in “the extent to which the prevailing context provides ground for comparison between groups.”

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the U.S. soldiers, the overgeneralization about either population led to a struggle over more than just Baghdad.

The “psychological warfare campaign,” as dubbed by psychology professor Anthony Paratkanis of the University of California, has been a constant struggle between Iraqis and U.S. soldiers since the inception of this war. Each side vilifies the other, and evidence of both arguments is played out in broadcasts in the Arab World and U.S. media. Prisoners of War, captured U.S. soldiers, and horrifying stories from both sides continue to plague this battle of communication which is continuously weakened by public diplomacy. Paratkanis argues that despite U.S. efforts in the propaganda campaign, the ability of the Bush administration to build and preserve public support for military action domestically and abroad has failed. Paratkanis argues that the bigger issue is America’s fight to win the communication war. “If you look at how Americans are viewed in other countries, it has never been lower.”

Paratkanis’ book, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, argues the same. In his book, Paratkanis claims that the war in Iraq and the communication between the two sides has been about more than just “bombs and bullets.” He says, “If you don’t win the hearts and minds of people, you can win the


military war and lose the big war.” 10

Damaging these efforts even more was the series of initiatives that were based largely on racial profiling. Following 9/11, American policies were quickly relayed back to the Arab world exacerbating fear on all sides. Dr. James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, explains that this spoke louder than words, “The message that these practices sent back to the Arab world undercut the President’s early words of concern that the war against terror not be seen as a ‘war against Arabs and Islam.’ At the same time, the behavior of the Attorney General only served to fuel the suspicions that some Americans had begun to feel toward their Arab and Muslim neighbors. The result was greater fear all the way around.”11

Similarly, the Muslim world did little to communicate with the Western world. The only messages coming out of the Arab world were messages from Osama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad communicating with the Western world, moderate Muslim voices were not part of the discussion. 12 In Iraq, there were several wars happening simultaneously: a political war, a territorial war, and most importantly a communication war. The public media could not deliver the messages necessary to “win the hearts and minds” of the people, and the negligence of the troops on the ground spoke much louder than words.


The Effect on Americans

Winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqis is not only important for the forces on the ground, but also American citizens back at home. The most substantial consequence of a poorly fought and planned war is felt among the ethnic Americans back home. These Americans, who identify as a sub-culture of the Arab and Muslim world, initially felt the consequences of a cultural clash first with the initial attacks of 9/11. The September 11 terrorists shook the foundations of modern Arab American identity, unleashing a gateway for discrimination and racial profiling in America. The backlash of this incident and its repercussions continue to haunt Americans.

Not the first community to feel a backlash after an international conflict, Arab and Muslim Americans were victim of racial marginalization. Orientalism, the misrepresentation, prejudice, and bias by Western thinkers of the “East,” has long polarized communication efforts. In the case of the Arab American, we see a classic case of this type of otherization. Arab and Muslim Americans were defined by other groups in opposition to themselves self in an ‘us and them’ way of thinking which constructs an identity for the ‘other.’

Americans of Arab, Muslim Sikh, and South Asian descent, and in some cases Hispanic Americans faced violence and personal attacks, and even murder as a result of this extreme otherization. Much like the reasons and ideals for initially going to war is seen in a Huntingtonian approach, the Arab American community felt significant

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alienation in their local communities and national policies that grew out of stereotyping and generalization.

In 2000, the FBI received reports of 28 hate crimes against Muslims and Arabs in the United States. In 2001, that number increased to 481. Listed are some various examples of incidents of violence in a report gathered by the Arab American Institute in a report released in 2002.

**Phoenix, Arizona:** On Sept. 15th, Frank Silva Roque shot to death Balbir Singh Sodhi. Roque allegedly killed Sodhi as part of a multiple-incident shooting rampage that included shootings at a Lebanese-American clerk who escaped injury, at another gas station in Mesa, and at the home of an Afghan family. (Arizona Republic, Sept. 18)

**Reedley, California:** Abdo Ali Ahmed, a Yemeni grocer, was shot to death in his shop over the weekend. Family members said the day before he was killed, death threat that included anti-Arab statements was found on windshield of Ahmed’s car. It is being investigated as a hate crime. (Washington Post, Oct. 3)

**Fresno, California:** Rien Said Ahmed was shot and killed while at work. Witnesses saw four males speed from the store in white sedan. No money or merchandise was stolen. Ahmed had received threats since mid-September. (The Fresno Bee, Oct. 2)

**Cleveland, Ohio:** Ford Mustang driven through entrance of Ohio’s largest mosque. Mosque unoccupied at time; only driver injured. (Estimated damages: $100,000) (AP, Sept. 13)

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This type of fear-mongering has long lasting implications, particularly as the war in Iraq continues, and more U.S. casualties are reported. Stereotypes which draw on perceptions of national culture, social and cultural differences have been mostly negative and in some cases, extremely violent. The situation in Iraq will ultimately continue a cycle of violence that begins in Iraq, and ends in the U.S.

In 2006, the Pew Global Attitudes Project released a survey of Muslim and Western perceptions of each other. Poling over 14,000 in 13 nations, the results were mostly negative. The chart pictured on this page, and the
following page, demonstrate that both Westerners and Muslims hold negative perceptions of each other.\textsuperscript{16}

In a review of the survey, Princeton Professor Amaney Jamal pointed out:

"It's more disappointing if you look at the fact that it is in the United States' strategic interest in the region to win the hearts and minds of people in the Muslim world. U.S. troops are on the ground in Iraq. Where there is a need for U.S. involvement and U.S. mediation of conflicts, such as the Arab-Israeli and Afghanistan conflict, there is a total loss of trust in the Muslim world of all things American or Western. This also hurts our ability to deal with issues and problems diplomatically because there is this huge tension.\textsuperscript{17}

This huge tension also translates into communication efforts between the soldiers and the native Iraqis.

\textit{Insurgencies}

The most dangerous threat that poor American policies and behavior in the Middle East pose are the continuing rise of insurgencies that are appearing in Iraq. This is a threat to our forces and our diplomats serving in Iraq. As the war continues, the notion of a “global jihad” continues to be more real. Anger over


\textsuperscript{17} The Pew Forum, \textit{Islam and the West: How Great a Divide?} (Washington DC, July 10, 2006).
the treatment of prisoners in Iraq and Guantanamo continue to fuel these movements and insurgencies that have grown in and out of Iraq. While Huntington failed in his over-generalizations of the Muslim and Arab populations, his assertions were true of a small but powerful pocket of the population. Huntington concluded that, “Growing Muslim anti-Westernism has been paralleled by expanding Western concern with the ‘Islamic threat’ posed particularly by Muslim extremism.” 18 This was seen immediately in Iraq. Shortly after the invasion, leaflets were distributed at Friday prayers at Sunni Mosques reading, as follows:

The Disaster of the Occupation and the Duties of the Islamic Nation: The goal of the infidels, after stealing our wealth, is to remove us from our religion by force and all other means so that we become a lost nation without principle, making it easier for the Jews and Christians to humiliate us 19

These local conflicts can generate instability with potential to disrupt the operations in Iraq, and to endanger the safety of the soldiers.

As countries in the Muslim and Arab World continue to identify in ethnic and religious terms, “differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues, ranging from human rights to immigration to trade and commerce to the environment.” In the case of Iraq, the Arab and Muslim World share a common identity with Iraq, thus creating a solidarity against the U.S. and more broadly the Western World. Hundreds of cases of young Muslim men in the Arab World are turning to violence and attacks as a

18 Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, 215.

19 Shadid, Night Draws Near: Iraq’s People in the Shadow of America’s War, 312.
means of retaliation. They see an “us” versus “them” relation existing between themselves and people who assumedly take issue with their ethnicity or religion.\footnote{Huntington, \textit{Clash of Civilizations}, 166.}

The situation lacks any appreciation of context of culture or historical knowledge of beliefs, attitudes, and values shared by members of a discourse community that contribute to the meaning of their verbal exchanges.\footnote{Claire Kramsch, \textit{Language and Culture} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.} Both the U.S. Soldiers and the Iraqis are guilty of inadequate knowledge about the other producing failed communication and a hostile environment for both in respective locations.

The full effect of the war in Iraq has yet to be understood. The backlashes on both Iraqis and Americans will continue for many years, as will the strain on the diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and the Arab and Muslim world. Unfortunately, the negative repercussions will continue to breed. Cultural education and awareness is a vital tool in limiting prejudices that breed out of ignorance.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The war in Iraq has come to demonstrate how ineffective the cultural and linguistic training at the lower levels were. Since the 2003 invasion, the U.S. Military has demonstrated a severe lack of cultural understanding of Iraq and its cultural norms. This has limited the government’s ability to complete its missions and communicate effectively. As my thesis has demonstrated, this has caused a devastating effect on U.S. foreign relations with the Arab and Muslim Worlds.

The military operation did not consider cultural awareness into its preparation, creating a difficult post-battle operating environment. Peace-keeping Operations in Iraq have actually led to just the opposite: more conflict. American forces continue to face an increase in animosity among many Iraqis and, in addition to already hostile environment, are required to combat a negative image of the U.S. military. The limited amount of cross-cultural preparation resulted in the severe mishandling of various incidents in this war.

A review of the current methods of pre-deployment training finds that they are often simplistic and too general to address the intricacies of the various cultures and behaviors of the indigenous peoples. Recent improvements in preparation courses for soldiers still do not properly prepare soldiers for effective civilian-communication in a time of war. Training should be restructured to match the needs of those soldiers returning from Iraq. Creating stronger evaluation systems, classroom training materials and ranking systems which incorporate culture specific knowledge into the classroom are
absolutely necessary for military personnel of all ranks. Creating a standardized debrief procedure will also help develop curriculum, and ensure that deploying troops know what to expect, and are equipped with the necessary skills to complete their missions and ensure their safety.

The current training methods in place do little to aid the success of the military in Iraqi, and often times have caused many of the grievances in this war. The torture exhibited in the prisons at Abu Ghraib, demonstrated not only an abuse of power and authority, but also the exploitation of the Arab and Muslim culture. The lack of cultural sensitivity, further damaged relationships between the soldiers and the civilians of Iraq, and most importantly showed the severe absence of proper cultural education. Moreover, the incidents demonstrate limited guidance on cultural interactions, and ignorance about the influence of actions on the ability to successfully complete the U.S. political mission in Iraq.

Events in Iraq have sent a clear message to the government: We can no longer prepare for war by solely preparing for the physical battle. In Iraq, soldiers are fighting a new kind of war, which requires a new kind of training. Cultural understanding of the adversary is key to improving diplomatic efforts between the U.S. and the regions.

This thesis offered various suggestions and improvements to restructure military training to better prepare these soldiers for unconventional warfare. The reliance on Arab and Muslim Americans to advance training is a viable option for increased understanding and awareness.
The catastrophic incidents with the U.S. Military in the post-combat phase of the war are a testament to a severe clash of ignorance. The relationship that amounted between the soldiers and Iraqis emulates the ideas of various political and communication thinkers. Writers like Samuel Huntington, Edward Said, Henri Tajfel, Edward Hall and others addressed the various conditions of communication and cultural differences in a time of conflict.

The clashes that we are witnessing in Iraq today, are mainly derived from pre-conceived notions and stereotypes that so deeply rooted in both cultures. This is something that we must strive to limit on both sides of the conflict. Countering these stereotypes is an important feat for public diplomacy. Hostility is often bred out of cultural ignorance. Lack of familiarity with the region, the religion, the cultural norms, the do’s and don’t do’s created a harsh environment which continues to limit U.S. success in Iraq.

The impact of this war and its mishandlings will continue to haunt U.S. policies and diplomacy efforts in the region for years to come. Furthermore, Americans both in Iraq and in the U.S. will continue to feel the repercussions of poor strategy and training over the course of the past six years. The effect of the war with Iraq has yet to be entirely discovered, but the consequences will be long lasting.

Since this thesis is being completed parallel to the new President Obama’s administration’s first 100 days in office, I must note that from his first day in office President Obama has made serious efforts to improve the U.S. position in Iraq. Obama has sought to fulfill his campaign promises of ending the war in Iraq and removing the
troops. More importantly, however, his administration has launched a diplomatic effort to further the stability of Iraq and the region. Communication with the Arab and Muslim World has taken a novel approach since his term, and is being recognized throughout the Arab World.

This type of communication and emphasis on diplomacy falls in line with the need to improve communication efforts within the military. Education of the troops prior to deployment to Iraq is vital to improving intercultural competence and succeeding in the “War on Terror.” Diplomacy is no longer the sole responsibility of diplomats, but as this thesis demonstrates, of soldiers as well.

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1 The Obama administration has renamed what Bush used to call “War on Terror.” It is now called “Overseas Contingency Operation,” http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/03/23/the_end_of_the_global_war_on_t.html, accessed April 19, 2009.
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