

# **Afghan Tortoise, Korean Hare: Advising in Hard and Soft Cultures**

**A Monograph  
by  
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With combat formations scheduled to begin drawing down in July 2011 and the role of US forces in Iraq already shifting away for the lead, the future of these two nations will grow increasingly dependent upon the indigenous security forces and the US advisors behind the scenes. In order to understand how to conduct successful advisory operations, it is worthwhile to compare the successful effort in Korea, from 1946-1953, with the as yet unsuccessful effort in Afghanistan from 2003-2010.

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## Abstract

Afghan Tortoise, Korean Hare: Advising in Hard and Soft Cultures by MAJ Matthew S. Farmer, US Army, 63 pages.

With combat formations schedule to begin drawing down in July 2011 and the role of US forces in Iraq already shifting away from the lead, the future of these two nations will grow increasingly dependent upon the indigenous security forces and the US advisors behind the scenes. In order to understand how to conduct successful advisory operations, it is worthwhile to compare the successful effort in Korea, from 1946-1953, with the as yet unsuccessful effort in Afghanistan from 2003-2010.

In comparing the Korean and Afghan advisory operations, this monograph examines the nature of the two advisory efforts, the physical and political environments, the relationships between advisors and local forces, and aspects of the cultures involved. This comparison reveals that though there are many similarities between the two efforts, two components appear to have played a key role in the disparity of outcome that exists after eight years of effort--the nature of the operational threat and the susceptibility of the local culture to outside influence of the Afghan and Korean advisory efforts, this monograph shows key roles in how quickly an advisory effort can successfully accomplish its mission.

The advisory efforts in both the Korean and Afghan cases started under similar uncertain and dire circumstances. Similarities also existed between the political and economic conditions of each country, as well as their physical geographies. Perhaps because of these similarities, US advisors pursued similar approaches and encountered similar problems. There were key differences, however. South Korea faced a conventional and largely external threat with military capabilities similar to its own while Afghanistan faced a diverse and primarily internal non-state threat and required security forces with a greater level of sophistication. Additionally, the ethnic composition of Korea was homogenous while Afghanistan's was diverse; a factor that would influence the difficulty advisory forces faced in training indigenous security forces. Finally, the differences between aspects of Korean culture, built on centuries of assimilation of influences from China, Japan, and even the west, and Afghanistan's, built on a rich history of resistance to change and outside influence, greatly influenced the willingness of each to accept and ultimately inculcate US military advice.

This monograph concludes that Korea's culture was "soft" and ready to rapidly assimilate US advice, making its security forces like a rabbit and capable of fast progress. In contrast, Afghanistan's culture was "hard" and resistance to US military advice, making its progress slow like a tortoise. Given the important role of culture in advisory efforts, cultural understanding and the manner in which advisors integrate with their counterparts, are critical to achieving success.

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## List of Acronyms

ABP: Afghan Border Police

AM: *Ansarul Muslimoon* (Taliban affiliate)

ANA: Afghan National Army

ANP: Afghan National Police

ANSF: Afghan National Security Forces

AS: *Anсарu Sunnah* (Taliban affiliate)

CSTC-A: Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan

DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)

EUSAK: Eighth United States Army, Korea

HA: *Harkatul Ansaar* (Taliban affiliate)

HJI: *Harkat-i-Jehad-i-Islami* (Taliban affiliate)

HMAA: *Harkatul Mujahideen al-Aalmi* (Taliban affiliate)

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

KMAG: United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea

LET: *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (Taliban affiliate)

MSSD: Most Similar Systems Design

NTM-A: North Atlantic Treaty Organization Training Mission-Afghanistan

OMC-A: Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan

PMAG: Provincial Military Advisory Group

PTT: *Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan* (Pakistani Taliban)

ROK: Republic of Korea

ROKA: Republic of Korea Army

TNSM: *Tehreek-Maram-Shariya Mohammadyah* (Taliban affiliate)

USAFIK: United States Army Forces in Korea

USAMGIK: United States Army Military Government in Korea



## Introduction

The United States is at a strategic crossroads and the future direction of its foreign policy depends heavily upon the outcome of ongoing US advisory operations. As combat units redeploy from Iraq and Afghanistan, security in those countries will increasingly rest on the shoulders of the indigenous forces and their advisors. If successful, the advisory efforts will have helped to build Iraqi and Afghan security forces that are capable of maintaining a suitable level of security and set conditions for lasting security partnerships. Such success might validate the melioristic foreign policy and full spectrum military operations that have characterized the last decade for continued use (albeit in a more cautious and realistic way). Failure, however, could deliver a lasting blow to US prestige and force strategic decision-makers to reassess the efficacy of costly intervention. This would dramatically alter the trajectory of US foreign policy and would likely weaken the deterrent effect of current policy on future adversaries and lead to a much more limited role for the military.

Given these stakes, it is not surprising that US military and civilian leaders view the development of indigenous security forces as critical to long-term strategic success in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although advisory efforts often take decades, they have the potential to provide a more efficient and sustainable method for carrying out foreign policy than the coercive methods that tend to alienate local populations and the international community. The current plan in Afghanistan seeks to begin transitioning security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the summer of 2011. However, despite an advisory effort that has lasted since 2003, the ANSF are purportedly 15 years from being ready to secure their country.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Coghlan, "Karzai Says Afghans Will Need 15 Years of Help," *Times Online*, 28 January 2010, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/afghanistan/article7006138.ece> (accessed August 20, 2010).

As an advisory headquarters in Afghanistan, the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) situation is unique, but not unprecedented in US military history. The United States Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea Army (KMAG) conducted a similar, but successful advisor mission from 1946 to 1953. KMAG's rapid success compared with NTM-A's lagging progress begs the question: "What factors have inhibited NTM-A's ability to rapidly develop a capable ANSF?" This monograph compares the similar situations of NTM-A and KMAG, and identifies potential factors that have contributed to the different outcomes in Afghanistan and Korea. In an examination of a broad range of factors, the reader will see that Afghanistan's complex internal threats and its culturally inherent resistance to Western-style modernization have been the major impediments to the kind of rapid progress KMAG experienced during the Korean War. The ANSF required dramatic improvements to meet the immense security demands created by internal and external threats. However, unlike the ethnically homogenous Korea, Afghanistan's diverse culture and deep-seated resistance to cultural change made these improvements nearly impossible. Understanding the dilemma posed by the threat and Afghan culture can provide a basis for developing a new advisory approach that accounts for the developing force's capabilities and limitations and cognizant of how long the effort will take. Only this kind of understanding will allow NTM-A to attain a level of success similar to that of KMAG in the long term.

Of course, positing culture as one of the barriers to NTM-A's success presents challenges of its own. On the surface, such a conclusion smacks of Western ethnocentrism.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, culture is not monolithic but varies both between and within groups in a given society. One must use caution when applying cultural description to an entire nation, especially one as diverse as Afghanistan. Finally, the term culture itself is the subject of contentious debate among many

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<sup>2</sup> Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Chicago: McGraw Hill, 2005), 400. Hofstede defined ethnocentrism as "applying the standards of one's own society to people outside that society." Ethnocentrism also includes a belief in the superiority of one's own culture.

academic fields and among military professionals. Regardless, it would be difficult to ignore the tremendous role that culture plays in the interactions between military advisors and their indigenous counterparts, so gaining a deeper understanding of it and its role in helping or hindering advisory operations is a worthy endeavor.

## Methodology

The methodology for comparing KMAG and NTM-A had two key characteristics. First, it employed a most similar systems design (MSSD) comparative analysis. Second, the system of variables used for comparison reflected an appreciation for the complexity of the two situations. Both of these characteristics have implications that require further explanation.

A most similar systems design (MSSD) comparative analysis is one in which the cases exhibit many similarities, but possess different outcomes.<sup>3</sup> There were extensive similarities between KMAG and NTM-A. Both situations involved a robust conventional US advisory organization operating in a non-Western culture. Both efforts occurred in countries with rugged, mountainous terrain, in places that were cultural and political crossroads. Surrounding powers dominated the politics and culture of each country, and both countries were finishing a long period of brutal conflict. An MSSD comparative analysis helped to explore the similar advisory efforts of KMAG and NTM-A, filter out similarities, and thus find the differences between the two situations. These differences could then help to explain why the outcomes were so different and provide insight into how the military might improve its ability to conduct advisory efforts.

The strength of the two-country MSSD comparative analysis is in its ability to focus on the details and provide greater depth of analysis.<sup>4</sup> Such a study allows for a “middle level of conceptual abstraction.” Despite the small number of cases, the use of macro-level variables

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<sup>3</sup> Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

provides the conclusions with some applicability to other situations.<sup>5</sup> However, because of the small sample size, the validity of those conclusions is limited to other cases with similar characteristics.<sup>6</sup> One should be cautious about applying the conclusions of this comparison to other advisory efforts unless they involve large-scale US advisory efforts in foreign cultures, having taken place over a period of 5-10 years.

Selection bias is an issue with comparative analysis that the author must always address. Selection bias relates to how the author picks each case. The danger is that the author chooses the cases that support the thesis and does not consider the negative cases.<sup>7</sup> For this monograph, the author started with the research question related to NTM-A's lack of success. After preliminary research of different US advisory efforts in the twentieth century, the KMAG case was the most similar with a different outcome, and thus was the best case for comparison. Due to the length constraints of this paper, more cases could not be included, but future research in the area of advisory efforts could include a wider range of cases to improve the validity of the conclusions.

The second aspect of the methodology was the appreciation of the complex nature of the situations, employing a system of four variables: the advisory effort, the environment, the relationship between advisors and indigenous forces and the indigenous culture.<sup>8</sup> It is important to view the variables not as neatly distinct entities, but rather permeable categories of factors that overlap and relate interdependently with each other. This means that each variable affects the other variables as well as the outcome. Christopher Pickvance described this type of a relationship between variables as a "complex causal model."<sup>9</sup> It would not have been valid to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>6</sup> Landman, 69.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>8</sup> *Art of Design, Student Text, Version 2.0* (Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, May 2010), 21. This text identifies "interdependence" as the primary component of complex systems. In this system for analysis, all the variables influence all the others, making it a complex system.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher G. Pickvance, "Four Varieties of Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 16 (2001): 9.

attempt to isolate one of the variables and draw a simple causal relationship between it and the advisory effort's outcome. On closer inspection, the interdependence of the variables is clear. The advisory efforts affected the security and political environments, as well as the indigenous cultures and relationship between the advisors and indigenous forces. The environment presented risks to and opportunities for the advisory efforts. Environmental factors, such as geography and ethnic composition, shaped the cultures, and advisors' perceptions of the culture. The culture affected the relationship between the advisors and indigenous security force. As is so often the case when examining human behavior and interactions, this interdependence of variables makes them impossible to isolate. While this approach does not allow for the discovery of a single causal factor for explaining NTM-A's failure, it does allow for the identification of a set of "causal conditions" to explain the NTM-A outcome that differs from KMAG's.<sup>10</sup> The comparative analysis showed the conditions of the advisory effort, and the relationships between the US advisors and their counterparts to be very similar. Many of the environmental conditions were also similar, but the threat in Afghanistan and cultural resistance of the Afghan people, represented the primary difference in the two situations. These differences explained why NTM-A's success has been so elusive, while KMAG's was rapid.

For conclusions and recommendations, the methodology simply draws from the analysis implications for what military leaders needed to know about culture in order to tailor their approach to conduct advisor operations more successfully. Generally, US leaders must be able to anticipate how an indigenous force will react to its US advisors. Knowing how the culture will react offers leaders the opportunity to know how long the effort might take, how best to shape the approach, and a clearer picture of what they can change about the indigenous force, and what must remain intact. Knowing how culture influences how security forces will react to advice gives insight into opportunities and risk and provides the context for how to measure progress.

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<sup>10</sup> Pickvance, 7.

Such a judgment takes a great deal of cultural understanding that does not come easily. The Conclusions section will provide some recommendations for ways in which the military can accomplish this.

## **Comparison Overview**

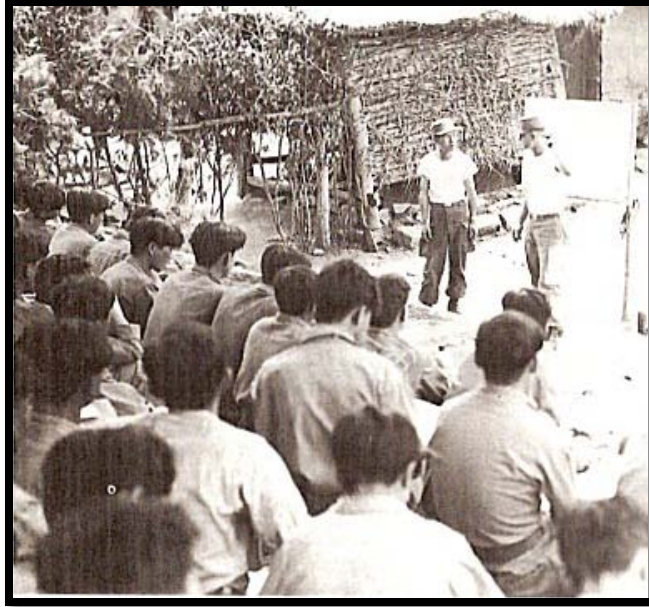
The comparison consists of four sections. The Advisory Efforts section analyzes each effort in terms of the reasons for and conditions of each advisory organization's creation and initial evolution. In addition to showing how the two efforts began in similar ways, this section provides some background information to set the stage for understanding the two efforts. The Advisory Efforts section goes on to compare the conduct of each effort and the problems that each encountered. One unexpected outcome of analyzing the advisory efforts was that although the efforts started out in very similar ways and encountered very similar problems, the different threat environments influenced the conduct of the advisory efforts and accounted for the differences in how each advisory organization evolved.

The Environment is the next section of the comparison. Environmental analysis compared the political, economic aspects of each situation as well as the physical geography and human domain. Politically and economically, both situations were similarly dire and unstable. While there were some superficial similarities between Korean and Afghan geography, the human domains were radically different. Korea's population was almost completely homogenous while Afghanistan's was extraordinarily diverse. The ethnic composition of heavily enhanced the ability of the Korean military to assimilate US advice and limited the speed with which the Afghan forces could develop.

The third section explores the role that the interaction between advisors and their indigenous counterparts played in the success or failure of the mission. While each individual relationship would be unique, it is possible to generalize about the prevailing Western perceptions of the indigenous culture to determine whether the relationships were generally a source of

friction or synergy. In both of the cases, the perceptions of the indigenous culture were negative and were at least a temporary source of friction which each advisor would have to overcome on a personal level. However, because both cases exhibited the same negative perceptions, then it is possible to conclude that these perceptions were not a decisive factor in determining the outcome of the advisory effort.

The last section of the comparative analysis examines each of the indigenous cultures. After briefly describing a method for comparing cultures, the cultural analysis focuses on the practices and values in both Korea and Afghanistan, as well as the historical experience of each culture with modernization and the West. This variable proved to be one of the primary causal factors for why KMAG achieved success so quickly and NTM-A struggled to achieve progress. The ethnically homogenous Koreans, with the cultural values and practices that are open to change, and negative historical experience with Japan, made it “soft” and ready to assimilate the KMAG approach to military development. In contrast, the diverse Afghan population, with cultural values and practices that resist change and negative experience with the Western powers, made it “hard” and resistant to the external influence of NTM-A advice. Thus, in terms of their response to US advisors, one can compare the Koreans to a rabbit, soft and quick to develop, whereas the Afghans were more like a turtle, hard to influence and slow to progress.



**Figure 1: KMAG training the ROKA in a classroom setting.<sup>11</sup>**



**Figure 2: Afghan advisors focus on hands-on training.<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>11</sup> Walter G. Hermes, *Truce Tent: The Last Two Years*, (Washington, DC: Center for Military History, 1990), 68 <http://www.kmike.com/TruceTent/ch4.htm> (accessed 5 October 2010).

<sup>12</sup> John Moore, Getty Images AsiaPac, March 17, 2010, <http://www.zimbio.com/pictures/1-NapK-UKdr/Army+Soldiers+Trains+Afghan+Army+Police+Cadettes/7KFwxIDjPBY> (accessed 5 October 2010).



## **The Advisory Efforts**

Despite a half-century and 3000 miles between the KMAG and NTM-A situations, the two efforts are remarkably alike. The genesis of each effort, their conduct, and problems they encountered bear striking similarities. Such similarities suggest that the capabilities and motives of the advisory efforts did not decisively determine the outcome of mission success or failure. The small differences between the two efforts support this assertion and illustrate the interdependence between the variables. Although each effort started out with similar capabilities and motives, they adapted differently because the different threats created diverging demands. In Korea, KMAG maintained its focus and tactical-level competency to meet the conventional threat of the North Korean Army. In Afghanistan, the insurgent threat forced NTM-A to broaden its focus and help create Afghan defense institutions and systems as part of a ‘whole of government’ approach.

### **The Genesis of Two Advisory Organizations**

Both Korean and Afghan advisory efforts began outside the spotlight of US military and political focus, in war torn countries, with uncertain conditions for each country’s future. The result in both cases was a small-scale advisory effort without a clear focus, inadequately preparing their indigenous security forces for the challenges that awaited them.

#### **South Korea: 1945-1949**

After the end of World War II, the United States focused on the Soviet threat to Europe. In the Pacific theater, occupation efforts in Japan dominated while the US Army Forces in Korea (USAFIK), composed of the US XXIV Corps, became the occupation force in South Korea. Soviet occupation in North Korea divided the nation at the thirty-eighth parallel. The Seventh

Division, under MG Archibald Arnold, became the US Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) and took charge of rebuilding the South Korean government.<sup>13</sup>

South Korea had been devastated by nearly four decades of Japanese occupation. Its economy was in shambles and the South Koreans no longer had the leadership and military expertise necessary to assume responsibility for governance and security.<sup>14</sup> This lack of expertise would require the USAMGIK to take the lead in development until South Koreans demonstrated the ability to act independently. However, US political leadership was eager to get out of South Korea and was only willing to provide South Koreans with minimal assistance.<sup>15</sup>

Further shaping the initial advisory effort was the uncertainty of the threat facing South Korea. From 1945 through 1948, the primary security issues centered on internal uprisings and instability.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the initial focus of the security focus was internal civil control. It was not until the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) gained power in North Korea and began developing a robust military force capable of offensive action, when South Koreans would begin to adjust the focus of their own security forces.

The combination of unclear strategic focus, insufficient indigenous capability and an incomplete threat assessment led to a small-scale advisory effort and miniscule Korean security force. Beginning in January of 1946, the American advisory effort in Korea started with just eighteen junior officers scattered around South Korea training a constabulary intended to reach only twenty-five thousand troops.<sup>17</sup> The Korean security forces grew from a small cadre of leaders who had received training under the Japanese system and a pool of inexperienced

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<sup>13</sup> Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAG in Peace and War* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1962), 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-17.

volunteers.<sup>18</sup> Initially, the advisors sought to develop security forces entirely focused on internal issues. When the new ROK government took over from USAMGIK in 1948, the advisors organization became the Provisional Military Advisory Group (PMAG).<sup>19</sup> The new ROK government wanted an army to counter the threat of the DPRK, so with the help of PMAG, they converted the constabulary into the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA).<sup>20</sup> PMAG eventually grew to a force of nearly five hundred advisors, as the size of the security forces reached one hundred fourteen thousand.<sup>21</sup> When the USAFIK deactivated and left the peninsula, PMAG re-designated as the US Army Military Advisory Group to the Republic of Korea (KMAG).<sup>22</sup> KMAG's personnel strength would remain the same until after the outbreak of the Korean War, only increasing in size as the size of the ROKA increased throughout the war. Despite the best efforts of the small corps of KMAG advisors, the ROKA was ill- prepared for the challenges they would face from the communist forces to the north in the summer of 1950.

## Afghanistan: 2002-2006

Just as in Korea, the unfocused attention, monumental uncertainty of the situation, and impoverished conditions contributed to a small-scale and haphazard beginning for the Afghan advisory effort. After offensive operations to defeat the Taliban and terrorists in Afghanistan initially grabbed the spotlight in late 2001, it quickly became an economy of force effort when the Iraq War loomed on the horizon and then became a much larger and more problematic situation by 2004.<sup>23</sup> The poverty and devastation wrought by decades of Soviet occupation, civil war, and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 41-43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher N, Koontz, ed. *Enduring Voices: Oral Histories of the US Army Experience in Afghanistan, 2003-2005* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2008), 5.

Taliban rule meant that efforts to create an ANSF would have very few resources from which to start.<sup>24</sup>

The tenuous control that interim President Karzai held made the future of his government and of Afghan security forces uncertain.<sup>25</sup> Adding to the uncertain way forward was the evolving coalition of participants, each with a different agenda, capability, and role they wanted to perform. This coalition made the Afghan advisory effort slightly different from the Korean one, which featured predominantly US advisors under one command. The nature of this coalition was a reflection of the decentralized, global, non-state threat that initially drew the United States and its allies to Afghanistan. While this muddled command structure made the Afghan situation more uncertain for the advisors, it was not a decisive factor in causing the Afghan advisory effort to stall. With or without the international participation, the Iraq situation would have still precluded Afghan advisors from getting any more attention and resources with which to accomplish their mission.

In early 2002, a small cadre of British and Turkish forces separately conducted the first formal Afghan advisory effort, forming an Afghan National Army (ANA) of between two and three thousand soldiers organized in five battalions and commanded at the national level by a corps headquarters in Kabul.<sup>26</sup> In October 2002, MG Karl Eikenberry took command of the new Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) and assumed responsibility for developing the ANA.<sup>27</sup>

The NATO allies' evolving appreciation for the complex security situation led the December 2002 Bonn Agreement to include measures for increasing the size of the ANA to sixty-seven thousand soldiers in five regionally based corps headquarters, commanded by a Ministry of

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<sup>24</sup> Koontz, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Defense (MoD) with a staff of three thousand.<sup>28</sup> At this point, the ANP, still under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), received their advisors from German forces under a separate command.<sup>29</sup> It was not until 2005 when OMC-A would take the police mission and change its name to the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A).<sup>30</sup> The organization would morph twice more: in April 2006, OSC-A became the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), and in 2009, CSTC-A added the moniker of NTM-A when it became a subordinate headquarters to ISAF.<sup>31</sup>

Starting from the original five battalions of ANA, the ANSF grew larger as US and coalition partners created a clearer vision of what Afghanistan would need in order to provide its own security.<sup>32</sup> In 2002, Afghan military forces were a conglomeration of militias, a remnant of Najibullah's communist government collapse in 1992.<sup>33</sup> The coalition disarmed and reintegrated many of these militias, but the coalition incorporated many of their ranks into the new Afghan National Army.<sup>34</sup> By April 2007, the ANA numbered roughly forty-nine thousand and the ANP numbered roughly thirty thousand, but just as the ROKA was unprepared for the challenges of the

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<sup>28</sup> Koontz, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Chilton, Eckart Schiewek, and Tim Bremmers, "Evaluation of the Appropriate Size of the Afghan National Police Force Manning List (Tashkent)," project funded by the European Commission, implemented by IBF Consulting (Kabul, Afghanistan, 15 July 2009), 35 [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/files/ANP\\_Tashkil\\_Final\\_Study.pdf](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/files/ANP_Tashkil_Final_Study.pdf) (accessed October 8, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Institute for the Study of War, Military Analysis and Education for Civilian Leaders web site, Afghan National Army page, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/afghanistan-national-army-ana> (accessed August 17, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Forces," Report to Congress, June 2008, 5 [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/united\\_states\\_plan\\_for\\_sustaining\\_the\\_afghanistan\\_national\\_security\\_forces\\_1231.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/united_states_plan_for_sustaining_the_afghanistan_national_security_forces_1231.pdf) (accessed October 8, 2010). The Bonn Agreement in 2001 set the ANA goal at 50 thousand and ANP at 62 thousand. Since then, as the security situation evolved the numbers continued to increase

<sup>33</sup> International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," *Asia Report* no. 190 (12 May 2012), 6. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/190-a-force-in-fragments-reconstituting-the-afghan-national-army.aspx> (accessed August 11, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," 6.

Korean War, this developing security force was not ready for the Taliban resurgence that had been fomenting since 2005 and would gain momentum by 2007.<sup>35</sup>

### **KMAG and NTM-A: Conducting Similar Advisory Efforts**

The Korean and Afghan advisory efforts began with a lack of focus and poorly prepared their counterparts for the security threats that they faced. The commencement of greater hostilities, however, crystallized the problem for both efforts and led each force to adapt. Both efforts restructured their command and control relationships, clarified the relationship of advisors to the indigenous force, and redefined the areas in which advisors needed to focus. The differences in how each organization adapted reflected the disparate threats that confronted each indigenous force. Instead of facing a state-sponsored conventional threat, as the ROKA did, the ANSF had to contend with many loosely affiliated, non-state actors, who did not wear uniforms and utilized terrorist tactics instead of conventional battle. This difference meant that KMAG focused its effort on conventional tactics, while NTM-A focused its mentorship on counterinsurgency. The nature of Afghanistan's threat also led NTM-A to develop more parity between advisor and advisee than was necessary for KMAG.

### **Korea 1950-1953**

The North Korean invasion on June 25, 1950 came as a surprise to the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA).<sup>36</sup> The United States and its allies managed to stop the communist advance around the Pusan Perimeter, but by August, only a few ROKA divisions remained intact.<sup>37</sup> Despite having fought over five hundred separate counter guerrilla engagements in 1949 alone,

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<sup>35</sup> Institute for the Study of War: Military Analysis and Education for Civilian Leaders web site. Afghan National Army page, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/afghanistan-national-army-ana> (accessed August 17, 2010). Scott Chilton, Eckart Schiewek, and Tim Bremmers, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Sawyer, 114.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 140-141.

the ROKA was not ready to defend against a penetrating mechanized offensive.<sup>38</sup> Between August and November, KMAG advisors hastily reorganized the ROKA in order to get them back into the fight, sometimes forming divisions overnight.<sup>39</sup>

One of the first adaptations US military leaders made was to clarify the KMAG command and control relationship with the other forces in Korea. Before the invasion, KMAG was an administrative command, responsible directly to the Department of the Army. The new relationship placed KMAG under the direct control of Eighth US Army, Korea (EUSAK).<sup>40</sup> Another key change was a clarification of the advisor relationship to his counterpart. KMAG leadership made it explicit that the role of the advisor was to “advise” not “command.”<sup>41</sup> Although advisors did not command ROKA units, as subject-matter experts they did maintain a hierarchical relationship with their Korean counterparts.

With the reorganization under the operational EUSAK commander, the scope of KMAG duties and mission expanded to include operational requirements. Now, in addition to advising, KMAG officers were also performed “operational, liaison, and supervisory functions.”<sup>42</sup> KMAG duties included training its ROKA counterparts, assisting them in the conduct of combat operations, and providing advice on the training and employment of the ROKA to the EUSAK commander.<sup>43</sup>

The change in organization also led KMAG leadership to focus the mission of the advisors and identify new areas of emphasis. The 1951 KMAG Handbook defined the twofold mission of the advisor as: “To advise the Korean counterparts so as to provide them with the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 146-147, 151.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>42</sup> “Advisor’s Handbook,” Office of the Chief, Korean Military Advisory Group, 1 March 1951, 1 [http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/docrepository/korean\\_advisors\\_handbook1951.pdf](http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/docrepository/korean_advisors_handbook1951.pdf) (accessed October 8, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

benefits of the military experience of the KMAG officers in order to accomplish successfully the overall combat mission.”<sup>44</sup> US military leadership emphasized the combat focus of the advisor effort. When GEN Ridgway took command in Korea, he made tactical competency and leadership the major areas of emphasis for advisors and the ROKA.<sup>45</sup> Through the remainder of the war, the KMAG leadership stressed the importance of sustaining cordial relationships with their counterparts, open communications (with US operational units), discipline, competence and standards.<sup>46</sup> All of these priorities reflect the tactical and conventional focus of KMAG.

Because the ROKA was under the command of US generals, there was little emphasis placed on developing the ROKA operational or strategic leadership or capacity during the war. EUSAK needed tactically sound, cohesive, combat ROKA units. US leaders would conduct the operational and strategic thinking and the ROKA would become tactically proficient at combat operations. The Afghan situation would require similar command and control changes but the powerful insurgent threat demanded that ANSF develop a broader set of skills, beyond simply conventional tactics.

## Afghanistan 2007-2010

Just as the initial failure of the ROKA led to changes in KMAG, so too did the ANSF inability to combat the Taliban resurgence provide the impetus for change within the Afghan advisor organization. Similar to Korea, changes in Afghanistan included the restructuring of Afghan advisory command and control, clarification of the advisor role, and a re-focus of the effort. The big differences between the KMAG and NTM-A changes were in the advisor-advisee relationship and the areas of advisor emphasis. NTM-A sought greater parity in the relationship with their Afghan counterparts and their focus was on developing the counterinsurgent

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<sup>44</sup> “Advisor’s Handbook,” 1.

<sup>45</sup> Sawyer, 176.

<sup>46</sup> “Advisor’s Handbook,” 2.



capabilities of the Afghan battalions, rather than on conventional tactics, as was the case for KMAG.

As the Taliban grew in strength between 2005 and 2007, the ANSF did not grow enough in size or capability to counter the opposition. In January 2006, the ANA reported roughly thirty-six thousand troops and the ANP strength, one that varied widely due to corrupt accounting, was around thirty thousand.<sup>47</sup> Not only were these forces too small to challenge the expanding capability of the Taliban and other terrorist organizations, they were also not yet trained and competent enough to act without significant logistical support and assistance from US advisors. The small numbers of ANSF and NATO troops, coupled with the lack of ANSF counterinsurgent capacity, left the Taliban resurgence unchecked in many rural Pashtun areas. As the Taliban stronghold over these areas solidified, it was clear to US military leaders that the advisory effort needed reorganization and refocus.

Between 2007 and 2010, US military leaders took strides to create greater unity of effort within the coalition of advisors and with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). CSTC-A took control over the entire police mission and became subordinate to ISAF in 2008. In 2009, the advisor effort changed again, placing the headquarters of NTM-A/CSTC-A in charge of assisting the ANSF institutional and generating force development, while giving the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) responsibility for partnering with the operational ANSF. In this configuration, the ANSF benefited from more focused use of each organization's strengths. NTM-A's more senior level leaders could focus on setting conditions for long term ANSF development while

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<sup>47</sup> Institute for the Study of War: Military Analysis and Education for Civilian Leaders web site. Afghan National Army page, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/afghanistan-national-army-ana> (accessed August 17, 2010). This source provides the ANA number. Scott Chilton, Eckart Schiewek, and Tim Bremmers, 63. This source provides the ANP number.

IJC's tactical expertise and cohesive operational units were a better fit to partner with Afghan operational units.<sup>48</sup>

NTM-A and IJC leaders also issued new guidance for how advisors were to relate to their counterpart. The titles of "advisor" and "mentor" implied an imbalanced relationship placing the advisor on a higher plane than his counterpart. This arrangement stifled the initiative of Afghan leaders and inhibited progress. In 2010, senior US military leaders sought to create a more balanced relationship, now describing the connection as a "partnership."<sup>49</sup> This new approach reflected US intentions to speed up progress, influence ANSF leadership to take greater initiative, and get the ANSF on a path to greater independence. Such traits were necessary for security forces conducting decentralized counterinsurgency operations.

NTM-A's mission expanded into a comprehensive approach for helping the ANSF build the kind of broad capability they would need to secure the country from the insurgent and terrorist threats. The 2010 mission was:

NTM-A/CSTC-A, in coordination with NATO Nations and Partners, International Organizations, Donors and NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations); supports GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) as it generates and sustains the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces), develops leaders, and establishes enduring institutional capacity in order to enable accountable Afghan-led security.<sup>50</sup>

While IJC focused on the tactical competency of the operational ANSF units, NTM-A provided a significant effort in building ANSF institutional capacity. In February 2010, NTM-A briefed that its role was to "team with and assist the Government of Afghanistan to:"

- Develop & grow their leaders for today & tomorrow
- Generate professional, competent, tactically self-sufficient ANSF
- Accelerate ANA growth & training to 134 thousand by Oct 2010

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<sup>48</sup> Wayne Grigsby Jr., David W. Pendall, and Ed Ledford, "The Combined Team: Partnered Operations in Afghanistan," Small Wars Journal Blog, article posted May 25, 2010 <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/05/> (accessed September 15, 2010), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>50</sup> NTM-A home page, <http://www.ntm-a.com/> (accessed August 24, 2010).

- Reform & grow the ANP to 109 thousand by Oct 2010
- Partner with & grow the ANA Air Corps
- Develop MoD & MoI ministerial systems
- Develop the institutional base (training and education) for force generation
- Resource the fielded force<sup>51</sup>

These priorities reflected the comprehensive approach of the US advisory effort in Afghanistan. Because of the insurgent threat, the advisory effort had to go beyond just building competent ANSF combat units. Unlike the ROKA that needed cohesive combat units, the ANSF also needed to build sustainable institutions and systems for executing a difficult counterinsurgency against a wide variety of determined enemies. This difference in the way the advisory efforts evolved was a result of each organization's need to adapt to different enemies. KMAG adapted to meet the conventional demands of the North Korean army. NTM-A adapted to meet the challenges posed by the multiple irregular threats plaguing the Afghans.

### **Different Time, Different Place, Similar Problems**

Both KMAG and NTM-A encountered problems internal to their organization and externally with the indigenous security forces they advised. Internally, shortages of advisors constantly plagued KMAG and NTM-A, affecting how deep into the counterpart formations they could advise. Externally, advisors had to overcome the poor equipment and logistical capability of the indigenous force, poor training, and incompetent, corrupt leaders. It is worth noting that KMAG had a much smaller advisor-to-advisee ratio than NTM-A had. Yet, despite the disparity, KMAG rapidly accomplished their mission. Two environmental factors account for this. First, the decentralized nature of counterinsurgency required Afghan advisors to work down to the

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<sup>51</sup> NTM-A web site, documents page, "NTM-A Command Brief," 13 February 2010, slide 5, <http://www.ntm-a.com/command/documents/355-ntm-acom-powerpoint?lang=> (accessed August 24, 2010).

battalion level, whereas KMAG advisors went down only to the regimental level. Second, the ROKA was able to learn faster from their US counterparts. Korea's traditional classroom educational system made the ROKA amenable to learning from KMAGs Western teaching style.<sup>52</sup> In contrast, the Afghans had far less experience in classrooms and therefore less prone to learning in that manner. Thus, with few advisors, KMAG could still be more effective.

## Korea

Despite increases throughout the war, KMAG struggled to acquire enough advisors to meet their requirements. Serving as a KMAG advisor was not a coveted role during the Korean War. They received less combat credit towards meeting redeployment requirements than their peers in US combat units and did not receive promotions at the same rate as US troop leaders.<sup>53</sup> Because US operational units received priority for personnel, KMAG was perpetually under-strength. In July 1950, KMAG had 470 personnel advising a ROKA with fifty thousand troops. A year later KMAG grew by over 200 percent to 942 advisors, but could not keep pace with the ROKA 500 percent growth to 250 thousand.<sup>54</sup> By 1953, KMAG reached 2,866 personnel assigned, but this still did not permit advisor teams to reach below the ROKA regimental level.<sup>55</sup> This rapid expansion stretched the limits of what the advisors could accomplish and often times the training suffered, especially for ROKA officers.<sup>56</sup>

KMAG had to help the ROKA overcome several issues dealing with properly equipping and sustaining units. Originally, the US did not assist the ROKA in developing artillery,

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<sup>52</sup> Felix Moos, interview by author, Lawrence, KS, September 17, 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Robert D. Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 18 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, reprinted December 2007), 11-12.

<sup>54</sup> Sawyer, 16; Bryan Robert Gibby, "Fighting in a Korean War: The American Advisory Missions from 1946-1953," (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2004), 158.

<sup>55</sup> Ramsey, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> Gibby, 78.

engineer, and signal capabilities sufficient for meeting the threats posed by North Korea. By 1951, GEN Ridgway determined that if the ROKA was going to be an independent force, it would need to have a complete suite of combat arms forces and equipment. It was then up to KMAG to help set up training institutions in these areas, provide trainers to oversee instruction, and help the ROKA field the new equipment.<sup>57</sup> The initial collapse of the ROKA in the summer of 1950 put it in a desperate logistical position. With up to seventy percent of the military supply captured or destroyed, the ROKA logisticians had become helpless and KMAG advisors had to take control, doing whatever it took to accomplish the mission.<sup>58</sup>

In training the ROKA, KMAG had to overcome the high combat operations tempo, the legacy of Japanese military influence, and the cultural gap between Korean and American.<sup>59</sup> Unlike in Afghanistan, however, Koreans valued education and despite Japanese outlawing of the Korean language during the occupation, most Koreans attended school through the sixth grade and could read and write Japanese.<sup>60</sup> This made the KMAG job of training the ROKA a much smoother process than in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, training was still a challenge.

Training always had to compete with operations. Even before the outbreak of war, the ROKA was heavily involved in quelling the large number of communist uprisings, riots and melees.<sup>61</sup> After the war started, training only became more challenging. Three training centers provided only the very basic level for new recruits.<sup>62</sup> By May 1951, KMAG had begun to create service schools to provide better training for officers and non-commissioned officers.<sup>63</sup> Many advisors found the Koreans to be eager learners, although it was often difficult for them to

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<sup>57</sup> Sawyer, 176-185.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 141-143.

<sup>59</sup> Gibby, 78.

<sup>60</sup> Moos, interview

<sup>61</sup> Sawyer, 67.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 148-150.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 175-176.

overcome some of the legacies of the Japanese system they had operated under for nearly four decades. That Japanese legacy included antiquated tactics and highly centralized decision-making that paralyzed the initiative of leaders to make quick decisions.<sup>64</sup>

A final area that posed problems for KMAG advisors was corruption that disrupted the flow of supplies, placed incompetent leaders in key positions, and threatened the good order and discipline of the units.<sup>65</sup> Fighting corruption was one of the major areas of focus that GEN Ridgway deemed necessary in his 1951 assessment of the overall situation.<sup>66</sup> Despite all of the obstacles, KMAG advisors were able to overcome them because the skills the ROKA needed were limited to conventional tactics and the ROKA soldiers were eager learners. The challenges that Afghan advisors faced would be more problematic.

## Afghanistan

As in Korea, insufficient numbers of advisors were also a problem in Afghanistan from the beginning. Even with the increased attention in February 2010, NTM-A reported that it had 2,382 personnel assigned of the 5,219 it would need to assist an ANSF with goals to reach 134 thousand ANA and 109 thousand ANP by October 31, 2010.<sup>67</sup> Although the IJC units partnered with ANSF field units augmented this number, it was still not sufficient for developing the capacity of units down to the loWest level, which is essential for successful counterinsurgent operations. Adding to the problems associated with advisor shortages was the increasing size of the ANSF. Although the expansion of the ANSF hardly compares to the 500 percent growth that took place in the ROKA from 1950 to 1953, it has still strained the capacity of the government to

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<sup>64</sup> Gibby, 78-79.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>66</sup> Sawyer, 176.

<sup>67</sup> NTM-A web site, documents page, "NTM-A Command Brief," 13 February 2010, slide 6, 19. <http://www.ntm-a.com/command/documents/355-ntm-acom-powerpoint?lang=> (accessed August 24, 2010).

support and the advisors to assist. In October 2007, the ANSF numbered less than ninety-one thousand.<sup>68</sup> By the end of 2010, NTM-A projected the number to be 243 thousand.<sup>69</sup>

Afghan advisors struggled to help the poorly equipped ANSF field new equipment.<sup>70</sup> Key shortages for the ANA included artillery, communications equipment and engineering assets.<sup>71</sup> In addition to supply issues, ANSF logistical systems had not developed enough to be self-sufficient, requiring advisors to push supplies forward to operational units. Shortages in trained logisticians with the ANSF and the propensity of Afghan commanders to utilize logistical units in a maneuver role further diminished ANSF logistical capacity.<sup>72</sup>

The ANSF size and logistical issues were only part of the overall problem confronting Afghan advisors. Training the ANSF confronted a set of obstacles that included the lack of familiarity that Afghans have with classroom learning and literacy, and the legacy of Soviet doctrine. Afghanistan's thirty percent literacy rate posed significant training problems. Especially when it came to teaching higher order skills to mechanics, logisticians, artilleryman, engineers, pilots, and operational planners, Afghan advisors had a difficult time training officers and soldiers who were not accustomed to the classroom and were largely illiterate.<sup>73</sup> Another impediment to training was the Soviet legacy. Much like the Japanese legacy in Korea, the Soviet legacy of the force and its highly centralized processes for decision-making crippled the

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<sup>68</sup> Institute for the Study of War: Military Analysis and Education for Civilian Leaders web site. Afghan National Army page, <http://www.understandingwar.org/themenode/afghanistan-national-army-ana> (accessed August 17, 2010). This source listed the ANA number at 50 thousand; Robert M Perito, "Afghanistan's Police: The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform," The United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, 2009, 4, [http://www.usip.org/files/resources/afghanistan\\_police.pdf](http://www.usip.org/files/resources/afghanistan_police.pdf) (accessed August 19, 2010). This source listed the ANP number at roughly 41,000.

<sup>69</sup> NTM-A web site, documents page, "NTM-A Command Brief," 13 February 2010, slide 6, <http://www.ntm-a.com/command/documents/355-ntm-acom-powerpoint?lang=> (accessed August 24, 2010)

<sup>70</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *Afghan National Security Forces: What it Will Take to Implement the ISAF Security Strategy*, (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies Reports, July 2010), viii.

<sup>71</sup> Cordesman, 58.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>73</sup> "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," 19.

ability for subordinate commanders to make decisions in a security environment that demanded low-level initiative.<sup>74</sup>

Corruption was another major hurdle for NTM-A to overcome. Afghan leaders often bought their positions through bribes and accepted bribes in return for similar favors.<sup>75</sup> Especially within the ANP, corrupt leaders were part of the narcotics network and were complicit with Taliban leadership.<sup>76</sup> Corruption also complicated the ability of ANSF and advisors to account for weapons and equipment.<sup>77</sup> Lastly, the rapid expansion of the ANSF led to less oversight of projects and issues of corruption, especially within the leadership degraded the ability of the ANSF to improve.<sup>78</sup> It is important to note that the Afghan corruption was more severe and difficult to combat than the Korean corruption. While both KMAG and NTM-A confronted corruption as a problem, Korean corruption was mainly limited to financial issues. In Afghanistan, the corruption is not limited to mere theft and favoritism, but also included collusion with the enemy. This factor made it more difficult for Afghan advisors to use money to improve Afghan units, created trust issues between both parties, and ultimately contributed to slower progress

## **The Environments: Human Domain and Physical Geography**

The environments of Korea and Afghanistan have many similarities, but also some key differences that help to explain the different outcomes. The environment represents the broad physical and human factors that existed in each place prior to the advisory effort's beginning. It encompasses the conditions in which the advisory effort and the indigenous forces interacted. The environment influenced the culture and provided the lens through which the indigenous

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>75</sup> Cordesman, 70

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>78</sup> "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," 9.



security forces viewed the advisory effort. It also provided the context from which Western people formed their opinions of the indigenous culture. The components of the environment are the political and economic conditions, the physical geography, and the threat that each nation faced.

The environment of Korea in the 1940s and 1950s shared many of the qualities of contemporary Afghanistan. Surrounding powers dominated each nation. Both nations faced political turmoil and economic hardship. Two critical differences in the environment, the geography and the threat, led to a more diverse culture in Afghanistan and a more demanding mission for the ANSF than for the ROKA. Both of these differences ultimately reduced the ability of NTM-A to achieve rapid progress. The compartmentalized terrain of Afghanistan shaped its diverse culture that contributed to more complex political and social conditions. These complex conditions necessitated a longer commitment on the part of the advisory organization.

## **Political Turmoil**

Both countries experienced political turmoil that made the future uncertain for the indigenous people, security forces and the advisory effort. In South Korea, Syngman Rhee struggled against a communist movement to establish legitimacy. In Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai struggled against the Taliban insurgency and a population skeptical of central governments to establish his government's legitimacy. In both cases, a lack of progress and corruption undermined the legitimacy of each government and created political strife.

Immediately after Japan surrendered, South Korean leftists, moderates, and rightists began vying for governmental control.<sup>79</sup> After liberation, but before US forces landed in South Korea on 9 September 1945, moderates and communists were able to form a coalition government and maintain a degree of law and order. In November of 1945, however, LTG

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<sup>79</sup> Bong-Youn Choy, *Korea: A History*, (Rutland, VT: Tuttle Company, 1971), 220.

Hodge, commander of US troops in Korea, dissolved the government and proclaimed a US military government in charge.<sup>80</sup> This existed until February 1947, when a moderate nationalist, Ahn Chai-hong, led the South Korean Interim Government (SKIG) and took control.<sup>81</sup> Opposition groups to the moderates were able to foment civil unrest because of harsh economic conditions. Starting in 1946, strikes and riots plagued South Korean stability.<sup>82</sup> Even after Syngman Rhee won the democratic election and became president in 1948, he had to contend with strife from within his rightist party as well as more serious armed rebellions from the communists.<sup>83</sup>

Much like South Korea after WWII, Afghanistan faced increasing levels of political turmoil after US forces ousted the Taliban at the end of 2001. Although the process of developing a legitimate government started relatively smoothly with Hamid Karzai's selection as the leader of the interim government in December 2001 and then as president in September 2004, a general lack of progress increased political pressure from within the government and gave leverage to the Taliban opposition.<sup>84</sup> Corruption was a key problem that threatened the legitimacy of the Karzai government and created an uncertain future for stability.<sup>85</sup> Questionable people and activity surrounded Karzai, including his brother, Wali, who had known ties to the Taliban. The fraudulent elections of early 2010 only added to the doubts on the legitimacy of the government within Afghanistan and the international community.<sup>86</sup> Just as Rhee struggled with

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 202-203.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 256-260.

<sup>84</sup> Shaista Wahab and Barry Youngerman, *A Brief History of Afghanistan*, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 238-239.

<sup>85</sup> Ali A. Jalail, "Winning in Afghanistan," *Parameters* 39 (Spring 2009): 20.

<sup>86</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 21 July 2010, under the summary section with no page number, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf> (accessed August 12, 2010)

keeping the communist insurgents in check, Karzai's inability to keep the Taliban from resurging and reestablishing shadow governments in rural Pashtun areas weakened his legitimacy and that of his government.

Both KMAG and NTM-A operated under strained political conditions. The fledgling democracies of South Korea and Afghanistan struggled with legitimacy and often overstepped the bounds of democratic leadership and into the realm of corruption. Because both advisory efforts dealt with similar factors, the political conditions reflect a similarity between the two situations and do not provide any indication as to why the outcomes were different.

### **Economic Hardship**

Both countries were economically devastated at the outset of the advisory operations. After WWII, South Korea's economy was in dire circumstances. The Japanese, at the time they surrendered, possessed eighty-five percent of Korea's total wealth, ninety-seven percent of its import and export trade, and ninety-nine percent of its heavy industry.<sup>87</sup> When the Japanese left, industry crumbled, inflation struck the currency, black markets took over, and infrastructure deteriorated. To make matters worse, there was a dearth of trained and educated people capable of rebuilding.<sup>88</sup> The US military government took efforts to fix the South Korean economy but even by 1948 South Korea still did not have electric power, raw materials, and technology, and inflation continued to be a major issue.<sup>89</sup> Corruption was also a problem. The worst offender was President Rhee who used economic profits as political favors and campaign funds.<sup>90</sup> By the time the Korean War started, South Korea's economy depended entirely on American aid. Secretary of State Dean Acheson testified before Congress saying, "The Republic of Korea's government

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<sup>87</sup> Choy, 340.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 346.

would fall within three months if economic assistance were not provided.”<sup>91</sup> The onset of war only made matters worse, leaving the nation in a state of epic devastation and the people in a state of extreme hardship.<sup>92</sup>

Just as nearly forty years of Japanese occupation devastated the Korean economy, so too did the two decades spanning Soviet occupation, mujahedeen conflict, and Taliban rule shatter the already meager Afghan economy.<sup>93</sup> Although a 2010 discovery of a massive reserve of industrial metals in Afghanistan gave cause for some hope, the Afghan economy was one of the worst in the world. Afghanistan’s major problems included dependency on subsistence agriculture, limited infrastructure, an antiquated system of land ownership, and a lack of educated people who can modernize the economy for growth.<sup>94</sup>

The weak economic conditions meant that both KMAG and NTM-A had to contend with the strains that economic hardship places upon a population and the members of its security forces. Additionally, because one cannot separate the issues of poverty and security, the economy was something that affected the situations for both advisory efforts. Thus, the poor economies provide another area of congruence between the two cases, and do not offer a solid explanation for why KMAG’s success was so rapid and Afghanistan’s was so slow.

## **Physical Geography and its Effect on Society**

The physical geography of Korea and Afghanistan is an area of significant difference between the two advisory situations. While the location of each nation made them subject to the surrounding powers, Korea’s terrain influenced its development of a homogenous ethnic composition, while Afghanistan’s terrain contributed to the development of a diverse ethnic

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 346-347.

<sup>93</sup> Katzman, 9.

<sup>94</sup> *CIA World Factbook*, Afghanistan page, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, (accessed August 22, 2010).

population. This key difference contributed to streamlining the advisor mission in Korea, while complicating the one in Afghanistan.

One Korea scholar described the country's location as a peninsula "suspended enticingly" between China and Japan.<sup>95</sup> Due to its location between these two powers, Korea was the object of many invasions. Mountainous terrain dominated much of Korea's eastern coastline and northern border, but they did not protect it from invasion. However, the terrain was rugged enough to limit an invader's staying power, protecting Korea's identity and much of its culture.<sup>96</sup> The mountains helped to ensure that no external occupation of Korea was ever permanent. Even the most brutal occupations ended with Koreans expelling the outsiders through diplomacy or force.<sup>97</sup>

Ultimately, Korea maintained its homogenous ethnic composition because only two larger nations surrounded it with access limited in the south, east and West by the ocean, and in the north by its rugged terrain. After a series of Chinese and Japanese invasions from 1592-1636, Korea practically closed its kingdom in 1644, believing such isolation would protect them from further invasion. For the next two centuries, Korea would maintain its homogenous ethnic composition, and earn the moniker of "hermit kingdom."<sup>98</sup> In 1945, when the United States occupied the peninsula, nearly all South Korea's twenty million inhabitants were of Korean heritage. About eighty thousand Chinese living in their own isolated communities represented the only significant minority population.<sup>99</sup> The US advisors encountered a very different situation in Afghanistan when they began their mission over fifty years later.

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<sup>95</sup> Woonsang Choi, *The Fall of the Hermit Kingdom* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1967), 1.

<sup>96</sup> W.D. Reeve, *The Republic of Korea: A Political and Economic Survey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 2

<sup>97</sup> Woonsang Choi, 1.

<sup>98</sup> Woonsang Choi, 1-2.

<sup>99</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow: Land of the Morning Calm* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), 7-8.

Geography played a decisive role in Afghanistan's evolution as a nation and a people. The Afghan population became diverse and tribal due to a dichotomy created by location and terrain.<sup>100</sup> On the one hand, the region's location as a crossroads of waxing and waning empires, culture, and trade made the population ethnically diverse.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, the extremely rugged, compartmentalized terrain contributed to isolated communities.

Scholars describe Afghanistan as a crossroads, "highway of conquest," "strategic position," or "fulcrum of empires."<sup>102</sup> Caught in between major civilizations and with no major geographical barriers, its location made Afghanistan an area vulnerable to invasion.<sup>103</sup> The land between the Oxus and Indus Rivers was a nexus for empires, culture, and trade dating back to the "Neolithic era and Aryan migrations" that began as early as nine thousand years ago.<sup>104</sup> Starting before Islam began its assimilation into the region in the late seventh century, the rise and fall of various Persian, Greek, Turkic, and Indian empires as well as ethnic migrations set the conditions for the diverse population that existed when the United States began its operations in Afghanistan.<sup>105</sup> At the outset of the US intervention in Afghanistan, the diverse Afghan population of twenty-nine million was forty percent Pashtun, twenty-seven percent Tajik, nine

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<sup>100</sup> Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 18.

<sup>101</sup> Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958. Reprinted in 1983, seventeenth impression, 2009), 25.

<sup>102</sup> Vartan Gregorian *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969), 10. Gregorian called Afghanistan a "Highway of Conquest;" Donald N. Wilber, *Afghanistan: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven, CT:HRAF Press, 1962), 24. Wilber called Afghanistan a "strategic position;" John C. Griffith, *Afghanistan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), 13. Griffiths called Afghanistan a "fulcrum of empires."

<sup>103</sup> Gregorian, 10.

<sup>104</sup> Wahab and Youngman, 31, 34-40.

<sup>105</sup> Wahab and Youngerman, 53-54.

percent Hazara, nine percent Uzbek, four percent Aimak, three percent Turkmen, two percent Baloch, and four percent are Nuristani and other minorities.<sup>106</sup>

The diversity of Afghanistan, however, did not translate into deep interaction between the ethnicities. Each group maintained its distinctness and lived in apart from the other. While many Afghan experts classified this social organization as tribal, it applied only to the Pashtun people, with the other sixty percent of the population operating under the leadership of “regional khans.”<sup>107</sup> Amin Saikal more aptly described the Afghan people as “microsocietal” because the term included both the tribal Pashtuns as well as the other groups who were “locally organized.”<sup>108</sup>

The geographic and corresponding ethnic differences between Korea and Afghanistan profoundly affected the outcomes of the advisory efforts. Afghanistan’s diverse population contributed to the ethnic and religious nature of its conflict with the Taliban. In contrast, Korea’s homogenous population shaped the political and ideological struggle of its war, one that was within a single ethnicity. The ethnic composition of the people also had an effect on the ability of advisors to effectively train their counterparts and on the ability of indigenous security forces to adapt and become more capable. While the homogenous Koreans were able to develop consensus and make decisions quickly, the Afghans always had to contend with the ethnic divisions that often complicated the ability of leadership to make organizational changes and decisions.

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<sup>106</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, Online World Factbook, section on Afghanistan, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>, accessed 8 June 2010.

<sup>107</sup> Wahab and Youngerman, 15-16.

<sup>108</sup> Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 19.

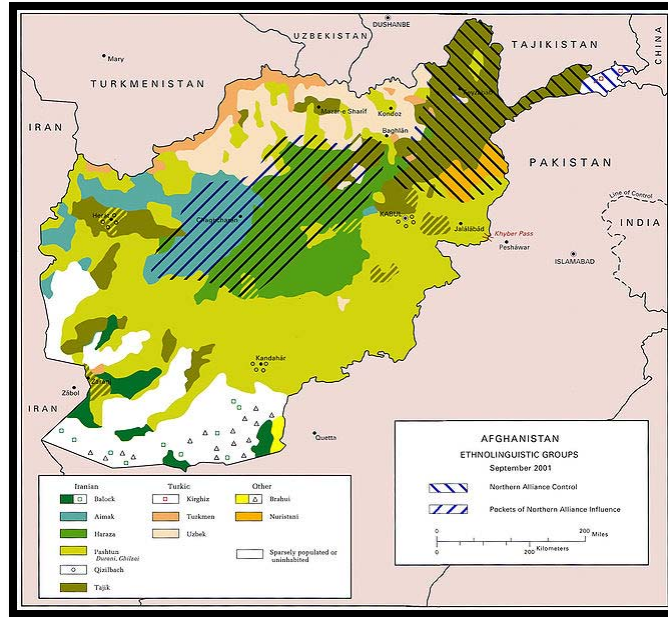


Figure 3: Afghanistan’s diverse ethnic composition in 2001.<sup>109</sup>

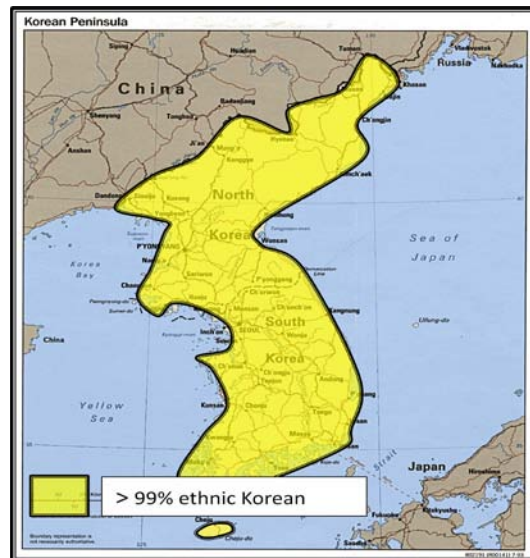


Figure 4: In 1949, South Korea’s population of 20.1 million included only twenty-one thousand non-Koreans, making it almost completely homogenous.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>109</sup> “Operation Enduring Freedom: The US Army in Afghanistan, October 2001 – March 2002,” US Army brochure on the US Army Center of Military History web site, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Afghanistan/Images/6-7big.jpg>, 6-7.

<sup>110</sup> AsianInfo.org web site, countries sub-heading [http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/countries\\_map/korea-map.htm](http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/countries_map/korea-map.htm) (accessed October 26, 2010). Glenn T. Trewartha and Wilbur Zelinsky, “Population Distribution and Change in Korea 1925-1949,” *American Geographical Society*, 45, no. 1 (January 1955): 4.



## Threats

As shown above, geographical characteristics contributed to Korea's ethnic homogeneity and Afghanistan's ethnic diversity. The nature of these ethnic compositions directly impacted the nature of the threat that opposed each indigenous security force. For Korea, the threat began internally as a communist insurgency, but as the North Korean military power emerged, that threat became primarily external and conventional. For Afghanistan, the threat was primarily internal and unconventional, featuring a loose structure of global jihadists and Taliban insurgents. The different nature of the threats had two major effects. First, because fighting internal threats requires dealing with the populace, its skill-set is more complex and takes longer to develop, especially in an environment where security forces may be ethnically different from the populace. Second, the KMAG advisors were fully qualified to advise an army on how to face a conventional threat while the NTM-A advisors existed in a US force that was, itself, still trying to develop methods for counter-insurgency fighting. Both of these impacts made progress for NTM-A naturally longer.

From 1945 until the outbreak of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) main threat came from the communist activists inside South Korea, conducting violent strikes, riots, and other attacks to disrupt the legitimacy of the government.<sup>111</sup> However, the threat focus shifted north when the USSR helped North Korea form the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in September of 1948. The North Koreans soon began to commit much of their resources to creating a strong and offensively capable armed force, and one that would require a different focus for the ROKA.<sup>112</sup> ROKA and KMAG did not shift fast enough, however, and the superior force of North Koreans overwhelmed the ROKA during the early phases of the war.

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<sup>111</sup> Sawyer, 26.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 104.

Although comparable in size, the North Korean force had received better training and better equipment from their Soviet benefactors. The bulk of the North Korean offensive capability comprised eight full strength infantry divisions, a motorcycle reconnaissance regiment, an armored brigade with T-34 tanks, and over 180 aircraft, of which forty were fighters and seventy were bombers.<sup>113</sup> Though the North Korean opposition was daunting and the combat conditions were demanding, the task was relatively simple: develop a ROKA combined arms capability that could outmatch, and later, deter and defend against the communists to the north. While the conditions of Afghanistan would be less intense than the high intensity conflict in Korea, the complexity of the threat made developing the ANSF a more time-intensive problem for NTM-A.

Because the US, coalition and the Afghan Northern Alliance defeated the Taliban armed forces by 2002, it was not until 2005, when a resurgent, adapted Taliban would begin to threaten the GIRoA and reassert its power over southern and eastern Afghanistan.<sup>114</sup> The threat that emerged in 2005 was a diverse coalition of Taliban groups and global jihadist organizations.<sup>115</sup>

The Taliban was not a monolithic organization, but rather a hybrid set of organizations that included the Afghanistan Taliban, Pakistan Taliban, *Quetta Shura*, *Peshewar Shura*, *Haqani Network*, *Hizb-i-Islami*, and many others.<sup>116</sup> Members of the *Quetta Shura* and *Peshewar Shura* directed the Afghan Taliban. Mullah Omar led the *Quetta Shura* that dominated Kandahar and southern Afghanistan while the *Peshewar Shura* oversaw the smaller and less cohesive Taliban groups in eastern Afghanistan.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>114</sup> “United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan,” US Forces, Afghanistan and US Embassy, Kabul, August 2009, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, “Thwarting Afghanistan’s Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach toward Peace and Reconciliation,” United States Institute for Peace, Special Report. Washington, DC., 8.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

One influential Taliban group was the *Hizb-i-Islami*, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar's influence was strongest in northeastern Afghanistan in the Kunar and Nuristan provinces.<sup>118</sup> Although in March 2010 Hekmatyar began reconciliation talks with the Karzai government, his reputation as a brutal warlord and devious politician marked him as someone who will always present some threat to the government.

Another of the important Taliban organizations was the Haqani network, led by Jalaludin Haqani and his son, Sirajudin. These fighters from the Zadran tribe operated in eastern Afghanistan, but more importantly provided a bridge between traditional Afghan Taliban and foreign global jihadists groups as well as the Pakistan intelligence service."<sup>119</sup>

The *Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan* (PTT) was the Taliban organization established to control the myriad of organizations in Pakistan.<sup>120</sup> Since the death of former Haqani sub-commander, Baitullah Mehsud August 2009, Hakimallah Mehsud has led the roughly five thousand PTT fighters.<sup>121</sup> The PTT did not just consist of Taliban, but also of a variety of groups formed by the Pakistan intelligence service in the late 1990s.<sup>122</sup> Groups such as *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (LET), *Tehreek-Maram-Shariya Mohammadiyah* (TNSM), the *Harkatul Mujahideen al-Aalmi* (HMAA), the *Harkatul Ansaar* (HA), the *Harkat-i-Jehad-i-Islami*(HJI), the *Ansaru Sunnah* (AS), and the *Ansarul Muslimoon* (AM) possessed stockpiles of resources and hundreds of fighters that operated under the auspices of the PTT.

Despite the declining numbers since 2003, al Qaida served as a powerful network in the region that provided the model of organization, financing, and strategy assimilated by the

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<sup>118</sup> Stanekzai, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Bill Roggio, "Baitullah Mehsud Dead; Hakeemullah New Leader of Pakistani Taliban," *Long War Journal* web site, 25 August 2009. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/08/baitullah\\_mehsud\\_dea.php#ixzz0xXIY34sQ](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/08/baitullah_mehsud_dea.php#ixzz0xXIY34sQ) (accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>122</sup> Stanekzai, 8-9.

resurgent Taliban.<sup>123</sup> It also drew foreign fighters from Arab countries, Uzbekistan, and Chechnya. Although conflicting objectives and methods sometimes strained the relationship between the foreign fighters and the Taliban, the relationship was symbiotic, with al Qaida providing expertise and resources, and the Taliban providing safe-haven and land from which to plan and train.<sup>124</sup>

With the myriad of opponents threatening the government, the ANSF needed to develop a comprehensive and multi-functional force in order to provide effective security. Building such a capability required the development of policing and counterinsurgency skills within the ANSF that is inherently more time-consuming than developing a conventional capability. Additionally, whereas KMAG possessed the conventional expertise and doctrines to build the ROKA, NTM-A could only draw from the emerging doctrine and professional discourse over how best to construct a force for counterinsurgency. Finally, the ability of an ethnically diverse force to operate across an equally diverse ethnic landscape increased the time required to develop and train forces. Thus, the diverse threat and its insurgent nature, coupled with complex human terrain, made the problem of developing the ANSF much more complex and time-intensive.

## **The Relationship between Advisors and Indigenous Security Forces**

The relationship between advisor and advisee is critical to success. Indigenous security forces must trust and respect their advisors before they can convert the expertise into progress. Analyzing how the military advisors perceived Korean and Afghan culture and how the two sides communicated provides valuable insight into how the two sides interacted and whether or not the relationship was a source of friction or synergy. In both cases, despite the emphasis that both

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<sup>123</sup> James Gordon Meek, "Al Qaeda in Afghanistan: Small in Numbers, Huge in Impact on Taliban," *New York Daily News*, 23 August 2010 [http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/2010/08/23/2010-08-3\\_al\\_qaeda\\_in\\_afghanistan\\_small\\_in\\_numbers\\_huge\\_in\\_impact\\_on\\_taliban.html#ixzz0xXTw5D15](http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/2010/08/23/2010-08-3_al_qaeda_in_afghanistan_small_in_numbers_huge_in_impact_on_taliban.html#ixzz0xXTw5D15) ( accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>124</sup> Stanekzai, 9.

efforts put on rapport and relationships, the ethnocentrism of the advisors and the language gap contributed to negative perceptions. This created friction that strained the relationship between the two and served as a potential barrier to success. Despite the challenges, however, strained advisor relationships were not a primary cause of success or failure for two reasons. First, tension between advisor and advisee is inherent in cross-cultural military endeavors, especially when the two cultures involved are so different, as they were in both Korea and Afghanistan. Second, KMAG's tensions were no less severe than NTM-A's and they were still able to rapidly achieve their objectives.

## **Ethnocentrism**

Often, cross-cultural perceptions take one of two extreme positions, viewing the foreign people as either hopelessly backwards or impossibly capable.<sup>125</sup> The extreme perceptions are typically the result of ethnocentrism, believing in the superiority of one's own culture over others and the measuring of other cultures by the standard of one's own.<sup>126</sup> Because US cultural standards were so different from that of the Koreans and Afghans, the ethnocentric US advisors naturally viewed their counterparts as backwards and incompetent.

While it is infeasible in a paper of this length, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the advisors' American culture and standards, it is possible to identify general cultural trends that shaped how the American advisors evaluated themselves and then applied this evaluation to the indigenous forces they advised. US advisors reflected the American culture from which they came, which in general means demonstrating behaviors that reinforce values of individualism, equality, and progress through hard work.<sup>127</sup> Because Korean and Afghan cultures did not

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<sup>125</sup> Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (Columbia, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 146

<sup>126</sup> Hofstede and Hofstede, 400.

<sup>127</sup> Esther Wanning, *Culture Shock! USA: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Portland, Oregon: Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company, 1991), 11-17.

emphasize these values, the indigenous forces failed to meet the expectation of advisors, leading to negative perceptions.

The negative perceptions of Koreans in the West that influenced the opinions of advisors were that Koreans were lazy, ignorant, violent, and incapable of self-governance. Writing in 1951, Korea scholar Cornelius Osgood captured how many Westerners viewed Koreans, qualifying his analysis by noting that, “there is no country of comparable significance concerning which so many people are ignorant.”<sup>128</sup> This Western ignorance, however, did not seem to temper the negative perceptions. He captured one the common stereotypes of the day saying, “Koreans are frequently damned as the laziest people on earth and in the next breath praised as miraculous workers, runners, burden bearers, and displayers of superhuman sources of energy.”<sup>129</sup> Osgood observed that Korean people did not have the same “reputation for industriousness given to both Japanese and Chinese, or Germans in the West.”<sup>130</sup>

The perception that Koreans lacked intelligence also persisted. A book by the Korean American Culture Association in 1945 charged that, “half a century of Japanese propaganda about Korea created the global opinion that ‘Koreans are not capable of governing themselves.’”<sup>131</sup> Osgood’s opinion was that “the Korean mind does not have the intellectual turn, that quality of constant willingness to reason, which, for example, distinguishes the Chinese or the Jews.”<sup>132</sup> Osgood characterized Korean behavior as excessive, “especially in their drinking and dancing.”<sup>133</sup> Perceptions existed, that held Koreans to be excessively prone to violence. A customary sport of stone-throwing that often resulted in fatality, captured for Osgood, the

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<sup>128</sup> Cornelius Osgood, *The Koreans and Their Culture* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951), v.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>131</sup> Changsoon Kim, ed., *The Culture of Korea*, (Korean American Cultural Association, Inc., 1945), ix.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

Korean's "violent nature."<sup>134</sup> Shannon McCune also characterized the Koreans as "volatile and emotional people, though naturally there are tremendous differences in temperament between individuals and it is difficult to generalize about them."<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, he continued to generalize, saying that Koreans have close family ties, and "resent slights from those outside their circle and often are inclined to argumentation and factionalism."<sup>136</sup>

The negative perceptions were not limited to civilians with little access to Korean culture. Even the KMAG advisors, those with the most contact with the culture, maintained negative perceptions, consistent with the ones held by the public. Most KMAG advisors viewed Korean culture as "archaic beliefs, superstitions."<sup>137</sup> It did not occur to most advisors that the Korean culture was simply "a different set of legitimate customs and beliefs to be understood."<sup>138</sup> Many advisors claimed that ROKA officers lacked initiative, did not conduct planning, were inflexible, did not maintain situational awareness, did not have good judgment and did not cooperate. The reality was that KMAG expectations were as foreign to the Korean counterparts as the Korean standards were alien to the advisors.<sup>139</sup>

Just as the negative perceptions dominated the views of Korea, so too were the perceptions of Afghanistan from the West pessimistic and degrading. The modern perceptions of the Afghan people traced their roots back to the colonial period of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when British diplomats and soldiers had the greatest interaction with the Afghan people. The British

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Shannon McCune, *Korea: Land of Broken Calm* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Press, 1966), 45.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ramsey, 14.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

experience in Afghanistan led to the myth that described Afghanistan as the “Wild East” and the people as “between modernity and the archaic, progress and backwardness.”<sup>140</sup>

The modern view of Afghans changed little since the colonial period. US advisors and their cultural emphasis on individual initiative, social equality, and progress predisposed them to view Afghans as backward, barbaric, and anti-modern. While “politically correct” speech made blatant negative commentary on the Afghan people rare, Afghan experts recognized the undercurrent of negative perceptions in the West, and felt the need to argue for a more balanced approach. Amir Taheri argued against the notion that Afghans were not ready for democratic reforms, citing the successful reforms in the 1970’s that did not last primarily because of the Soviet occupation and civil war that halted all progress.<sup>141</sup> Similar to the past perceptions of Korea, it was common for Westerners to view the Afghans as incapable of democratic self-governance. One expert on Afghanistan recorded this perception as a “myth being put forward that [Afghanistan] is ungovernable, that it’s a country full of wild people.”<sup>142</sup>

The issue of negative perceptions was not just a matter of advisors being ignorant of the indigenous culture. Afghan advisors appeared to be cognizant of the differences between the two cultures and the potential for friction that it creates between advisors and their counterparts. The 2008 Task Force Phoenix “Smart Book” asserted that the key to success was patience on the part of advisors.<sup>143</sup> This recommendation recognized that even when advisors understood the cultural differences, the lack of progress from a US perspective could still be extraordinarily frustrating and a divisive force between advisor and advisee.

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<sup>140</sup> Marcus Schadt, “The Man Outside: The Problem with the External Perception of Afghanistan in Historical Sources,” *ASIEN* 104 (July 2002): 102.

<sup>141</sup> Amir Taheri, “Myths of our Afghanistan debate,” *New York Post*, 15 October 2009 [http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/item\\_jwh5n7ZaKcraDDBSTk4m5L/1](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/item_jwh5n7ZaKcraDDBSTk4m5L/1) (accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>142</sup> Claire Lockhart, Director, Institute for State Effectiveness, interview by Greg Bruno, 29 September 2009, “An Afghan Path Toward Stability,” Council on Foreign Relations web site, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/20315/afghan\\_path\\_toward\\_stability.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/20315/afghan_path_toward_stability.html) (accessed August 24, 2010).

<sup>143</sup> 2008 Task Force Phoenix ETT Smart Book, slide 42.



## Language Gap

In addition to the natural inclination of advisors to evaluate indigenous security forces by US standards, the language gap added further complication to the ability of advisors to maintain rapport with their counterparts. Despite widespread use of interpreters, both KMAG and NTM-A advisors struggled to communicate effectively with their counterparts, who rarely spoke English.

Very few KMAG advisors spoke Korean fluently and had to communicate through interpreters. The use of interpreters, however, posed some problems for advisors that often led to miscommunication and friction. One of the difficulties was in teaching classes with military terminology. Because the Korean language did not have words for military terminology, interpreters had a difficult time conveying concepts such as squad, phase line, and headlight. Often, interpreters had to create Korean phrases that were cumbersome and time consuming.<sup>144</sup> More problematic were the misunderstandings and miscommunications that occurred because of imprecise translations. Despite the problems associated with the language barrier, only one of over two thousand KMAG advisors could function in the language by 1953.<sup>145</sup>

Being able to communicate with Afghan military leaders in their native tongue was even more difficult than in Korea because not all Afghans spoke the same language. While most Afghan officers spoke Dari, many officers' primary language was Pashto, and some soldiers were only conversant in Pashto. Many advisors and commanders believed that much meaning and intent was lost in translation and that the miscommunication was a significant barrier to success. One commander estimated that as much as fifty percent of the meaning was lost through interpreters.<sup>146</sup> Just as in Korea, despite the significance of this problem, the number of advisors who could speak Dari or Pashto was miniscule.

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<sup>144</sup> Sawyer, 63.

<sup>145</sup> Ramsey, 15.

<sup>146</sup> Neil Shea, "Losing Afghanistan in Translation," *National Public Radio web site*, (August 24, 2010) <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129396818> (accessed October 5, 2010).

## **The Impact of Strained Relationships**

KMAG and NTM-A both had to contend with ethnocentrism and a language gap that strained the advisor-advisee relationship. In both cases, the challenges were very similar, yet the outcomes were different. Thus, the comparative analysis did not indicate that the relationship variable decisively influenced the ultimate outcome of success or failure. KMAG and the ROKA overcame the cross-cultural tension and rapidly became successful, while NTM-A and the ANSF continued to struggle over a similar length of time. Although this variable did not emerge as, by itself, decisive, that does not mean that it was not important. If one thinks of the variable as a source of friction, the more difficult the mission, the greater the effect of the friction. In the case of NTM-A, the friction associated with the advisor-advisee relationship acted in a manner that exacerbated other problems, that of the insurgent threat and diverse ethnic composition, that were more fundamental to overall success of the mission. In that sense, although not fundamental to success or failure, the relationship difficulties served to retard security forces progress, but were not sufficient to make the effort fail. The next section shows how the indigenous cultures, along with the complex insurgent threat, was a primary cause for why NTM-A has yet to achieve success in the same length of time that KMAG accomplished its mission.

## **Culture**

As described earlier, US advisors in both Korea and Afghanistan sought to imbue in the indigenous security forces the types of security apparatus that worked well in the US military. However, the US systems for leadership, logistics, training, and operations carried with them cultural implications that were not necessarily consistent with the indigenous culture.

*Acculturation* is a term anthropologists use to describe what happens when two cultures

interact.<sup>147</sup> In general, “soft” cultures change easily, and “hard” cultures resist change.<sup>148</sup> This part of the comparative analysis attempted to reveal whether or not Korean and Afghan cultures were hard or soft, especially with respect to the changes that the US advisors sought. If they were both the same, then culture would not provide an explanation for why one succeeded and the other did not. If they were different, however, then culture would appear to have played a role in the advisory effort outcome. By examining the components of each culture, it was possible to hypothesize about whether the indigenous culture was soft or hard, and therefore how each one predisposed its security forces to accept or resist US advice. Historical analysis of each culture’s previous responses to Western culture then served as a means for supporting or refuting the hypothesis.

The comparative analysis revealed that the cultures of Korea and Afghanistan were dramatically different. More importantly, while the two shared some superficial similarities, the practices of each culture and their responses to the Western-style advice of their American advisors were polar opposites. Koreans, with a homogeneous ethnic composition and amalgamation of Buddhist, Confucian, and Christian practices were open to the cultural change embedded in KMAG’s advice. In contrast, Afghans, with a heterogeneous ethnic composition and tribal and Islamic practices recoiled at the changes that NTM-A tacitly promoted. Furthermore, the previous experience that each culture had with the West was consistent with the advisory experience. Korea’s interaction with the West in the nineteenth century began with some tensions, but turned generally positive with the success of Christian missionaries. In contrast, Afghanistan’s experience was as a pawn in the hegemonic struggle between Russia and Great Britain and was largely negative. Thus, Korea’s culture was akin to a hare, soft and ready

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<sup>147</sup> Felix Moos, “Some Aspects of Korean Acculturation and Value Orientation Since 1950,” extract from the International Conference on the Problems of Modernization in Asia, 1965, International Studies Center for East Asian Studies, Lawrence, KS: The University of Kansas, 751.

<sup>148</sup> Moos, interview.

to assimilate the US advice, as well as fast in its ability to adopt the US military model.

Afghanistan's culture resembled more the tortoise. It was hard and resistant to external influence, making the progress of its security forces slow and deliberate.

## **Culture: Definition and Analysis**

Culture is a term without a commonly accepted definition.<sup>149</sup> For the purposes of this monograph, we define culture using some generally agreed upon concepts and state that culture is the set of mechanisms people use for making choices.<sup>150</sup> Describing the nature of culture helps to elucidate this definition. Some anthropologists illustrate culture in computer terms: if a man's biology is his hardware, then culture is his software.<sup>151</sup> Just as software is a set of programmed mechanisms for interpreting information and producing responses, culture represents the lens through which humans view the world and make choices.

One can also think of culture as "social heredity."<sup>152</sup> Because parents pass the mechanisms for making choices to their children, individuals within a cultural group tend to make similar choices, or at least within a semi-predictable range.<sup>153</sup> Koreans tend to make different choices than Afghans, and both cultures tend to make different choices than Americans. However, every culture also has individuals and groups that fall outside the normal range. Some have very few outside the range and others have many. This makes some cultures cohesive and others less so, and makes it difficult to apply a single cultural description to all members of a group.

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<sup>149</sup> Robert J. House, et al, *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), 15. The authors of the GLOBE study assert that there is no consensus definition for culture among social scientists. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1973), 4-5. Clifford Geertz also asserts there is no consensus definition of culture among anthropologists.

<sup>150</sup> Moos, interview.

<sup>151</sup> Hofstede and Hofstede, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Moos, interview.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

In order to analyze the mechanisms, or components of culture, it was useful to adapt the methodology of anthropologist Geert Hofstede, who deconstructed the choice-making mechanisms of culture into values and practices.<sup>154</sup> He defined values as core cultural manifestations, changing very little over time, and practices as manifestations that are less important than values and hence more readily adapted.<sup>155</sup> Hofstede analyzed values through four quantifiable dimensions: power distance, collectivism versus individualism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance measured the values associated with how people relate to authority. Collectivism versus individualism measured the relationship between people and the group. Masculinity versus femininity measured the values associated with the roles of men and women. Uncertainty avoidance measured values related to how people deal with ambiguity and express emotions.<sup>156</sup> He argued that these dimensions show how cultures are different from each other at the most fundamental level.<sup>157</sup> The comparative analysis of mid-twentieth century Korean and contemporary Afghan values found them to be very similar. Both sets of cultural values held a high respect for authority, were uncomfortable with uncertainty, and emphasized the collective over the individual and masculine over the feminine. The major differences between the two cultures turned out to be in their practices.

Hofstede described practices in terms of symbols, heroes and rituals. Symbols were “words, gestures, pictures, and objects that carry a particular meaning only recognized as such by those who share the culture.” These aspects included styles and fads, so they were the most superficial aspects of culture and the most subject to change. Heroes were the real or mythical persons who embodied the most desirable characteristics and behaviors of a culture. These were less superficial than symbols and a little less subject to change. Rituals were the “collective

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<sup>154</sup> Hofstede and Hofstede, 8.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

activities” that a culture considered “socially essential.” Rituals included the manner in which the people communicate beliefs. Of all the cultural practices, rituals were the most resistant to change and it is in this mechanism of culture that Afghanistan and Korea most dramatically diverged.<sup>158</sup> Korea’s cultural practices facilitated the assimilation of new ideas, while Afghanistan’s cultural practices resisted them.

## Comparing Value Dimensions

Despite the divergent practices of Korea and Afghanistan, the dimensions of the values were remarkably similar. Both South Koreans and Afghans accepted that power within the society resided in the hands of a few. The cultures possessed sharp class distinctions that separated the few powerful from the rest of the population. Korea’s feudal system put the majority of the wealth into the hands of a few while the majority of people toiled at subsistence farming.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, Korea’s Confucian practices promoted complete subservience of son to father and subject to legitimate ruler.<sup>160</sup> In Afghanistan, the powerful also controlled the wealth.<sup>161</sup> Its tribal and Islamic practices placed a wide gap between the leadership of the tribe or the madrasa and the masses expected to submit to orders.<sup>162</sup>

Uncertainty avoidance explains the manner in which a culture deals with “ambiguity and fear about nature, other men, and the supernatural.”<sup>163</sup> Cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance rating have mechanisms that seek to eliminate ambiguity. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures tolerate ambiguity.<sup>164</sup> Both Korean and Afghan cultures were high on the uncertainty

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<sup>158</sup> Hofstede and Hofstede, 8.

<sup>159</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 50-51; Bong-youn Choy, 153-167, 351-353.

<sup>160</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 55-56.

<sup>161</sup> Ehsan Entezar, *Afghanistan 101: Understanding Afghan Culture* (USA: Xlibris, 2007), 33-35.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

avoidance scale because both societies had little toleration for life's indefinite aspects, and took measures to make those aspects more certain. All cultures use technology, law, and religion to manage uncertainty, but Koreans and Afghans rely on these tools in a much more profound way.<sup>165</sup> To improve predictability in life, Koreans relied on a mix of technology, law, and religion. Afghans relied more heavily on their religious beliefs and spurned many Western technologies, relying on their tribal codes and religious beliefs instead of national laws.<sup>166</sup>

Individualism versus collectivism seeks to determine the relationship between people and the group. Cultures with a high power distance value, such as those of Korea and Afghanistan, identify with the collective, more than the individual. South Koreans had a strong national and racial identity, but also related strongly to the family.<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Afghan culture included a concept called *quawm*, which roughly translates into the group with which one identifies. Most frequently, *quawm* was associated with tribe, but it was also associated with family, clan, ethnicity, madrassa, or any other group to which a person was loyal.<sup>168</sup>

Masculinity versus femininity identifies the distance between male and female roles in a culture. Both South Korea and Afghanistan were male-dominated societies. In Korea, parents sequestered girls in the home by age seven and not allowed to be in public without permission. When in public, South Korean women remained covered and they could not interact openly with men.<sup>169</sup> At the time that KMAG began its advisor mission in the late 1940s, South Korean culture was Westernizing and women were gaining more freedom, but the society remained distinctly male-dominated.<sup>170</sup> Afghan tribal customs subordinated women to men and the Afghan

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>167</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 30, 32.

<sup>168</sup> Entezar, 80-81.

<sup>169</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 33.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 36.

interpretation of the Koran supported these practices. Polygamy, limitations on women's rights within marriage and divorce, lack of educational and employment opportunity and strict dress codes were all practices that served to subordinate the role of women to men in Afghan culture.<sup>171</sup>

## Comparing Practices

Korea and Afghanistan had dramatically different cultural practices that ultimately contributed to their opposite reactions to US advisors. The diversity of Korean practices, despite their homogenous ethnic composition, indicated that they were relatively open to diversity and change. Similarly, the nature of their Shinkyo, Buddhist, Confucian and Christian beliefs allowed them to revere the past, but improve themselves for the future. In contrast, Afghanistan's uniformity of practice, despite the diversity of its people revealed a reluctance to change. Additionally, the rigid nature of their Islamic and tribal practices encouraged them to increase their devotion to their values and practices rather than change them. These two differences predisposed the ROKA to rapidly assimilate KMAG advice, and the ANSF to be less receptive to NTM-A's advisors.

## Korea

At the end of WWII, South Korea's cultural practices were a conglomeration of ancient shaman, Buddhist, and Confucian influences that had collided with the more recent influences of Christian mission work. Shaman religious practices are the oldest in Korea and their beginnings unknown.<sup>172</sup> By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Koreans no longer observed the Shinkyo practices, although they had assimilated many of the customs into Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. The Shinkyo faith asserted, "the heavens are living spirits, sometimes beneficent,

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<sup>171</sup> Entezar, 136-138.

<sup>172</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow: Land of the Morning Calm*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1956), 52-53.



but usually maleficent.”<sup>173</sup> Females acted as mediums and performed rituals to drive the evil spirits out of homes and buildings. Koreans observing these traditions believed in one God, *Hanunim*, and an ethical code that discouraged fighting and espoused loving your neighbor. Even Christian missionaries substituted the name, “*Hanunim*” for “God” when they brought their faith to Korea.<sup>174</sup>

Buddhism arrived in Korea in A.D 369 but reached its peak of influence during the Koryo period lasting over 400 years, from 918-1392.<sup>175</sup> The Korean Buddhists believed in the immortality of the soul and that through the six values, “charity, morality, patience, energy, and contemplation,” man could achieve perfection.<sup>176</sup> Buddhists brought elaborate rituals to Korea and excelled in architecture, sculpture and painting.<sup>177</sup>

Confucian thought entered into Korea became the dominant religious doctrine after the fall of the Koryo period in 1392. Confucian rituals included its belief system that taught Koreans to: “respect authority, be virtuous towards neighbors, observe customs and traditions, value abstract learning and despise scientific studies as well as warfare and manual labor, cherish simultaneously ‘selfish individualism and social trustfulness.’”<sup>178</sup> Confucian thought stressed the importance of “interpersonal relationships,” but was more rational than mystical, making it more of a philosophy than a religion.<sup>179</sup> Fatalism and ancestor worship were important aspects of Confucianism, as were the subservience of youth to age and women to men. From 1392 until the Japanese occupation in 1910, Korea observed the rigid strictures of Confucianism. Christianity would ultimately begin to supplant Confucian dominance in Korea, but Japanese occupation and

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<sup>173</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, 52-53.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Woonsang Choi, 80.

<sup>179</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, 55-56.

its promotion of the Shinto faith interrupted Christianity's growth. Japan promoted Shintoism during the occupation, but the religion never gained popularity because Koreans viewed it as a sign of loyalty to Japan. However, after the Japanese defeat and withdrawal from Korea, Christianity spread and adherence to Confucian thought dissipated.<sup>180</sup>

Christianity began to take hold in Korea around the 1830's, most readily in the "animistic north" than in the south where Buddhists and Confucians had more influence.<sup>181</sup> The Christian ethic included an "emphasis on love, justice, and personal freedom."<sup>182</sup> Along with the ideology, Christian missionaries brought a brand of modern Western culture. They introduced Western education, medical care, and scientific knowledge in a way that sought to break down many of the previous age and sex barriers of Confucian Korea.<sup>183</sup>

Christianity increased in the south when the Japanese were out of Korea and the North Korean communists persecuted Christians, causing them to flee. However, even as Christianity grew, it did so in a way that did not displace many of the traditional Shinkyo, Buddhist, and Confucian practices.<sup>184</sup> Rather, Christian missionaries harnessed many traditional Korean practices facilitating its rapid assimilation into the culture. By 1950, there were one million Christians in South Korea and 280 missionaries.<sup>185</sup>

The very fact that several different religious practices existed in South Korea indicates a willingness among the people to assimilate new beliefs and customs into the Korean culture. Perhaps the symbol that best demonstrates the flexibility of mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Koreans is the national flag. "A Korean, asked to explain the *Tae Kuk* [Korean flag], said, 'From the unknown

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<sup>180</sup> Kyung Cho Chung., 56.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 60.

comes the everlasting. From the everlasting comes the everchanging. The symbol, *Tae Kuk*, means infinity.”<sup>186</sup> Koreans understood that, although their culture was rooted in tradition, it was open to change.

## Afghan Practices

Afghan cultural practices were a different story. Unlike in South Korea, the diverse ethnic composition yielded Afghan cultural practices that were dramatically different throughout the nation.<sup>187</sup> However, the most influential practices in the country stemmed from the divisive tribal structures unique to the Pashtun majority, and the radical Islamic agenda that sprang out of the Soviet occupation and gained momentum under the Taliban prior to advisory efforts. These two forces served to make the culture hard and inflexible, especially to Western influence of US advisors.

Pashtunwali, the code of the Pashtun, was the set of rules that governed behavior within and between tribes.<sup>188</sup> The code consisted of various principles that featured the right to seek revenge, the right to seek sanctuary, the rights to defend honor, property and women, and the duty to provide hospitality.<sup>189</sup> Pashtunwali practices defied political, economic and social change because they satisfied only individual grievances and did not possess a concept of communal justice as more Western and modern judicial codes do.<sup>190</sup> Scholars note that Pashtunwali was a rigid and “stringent code...for tough men, who of necessity live tough lives.”<sup>191</sup> Although not all the people of Afghanistan organized into tribes, the tribal practices were important to all Afghans because the Pashtun people comprised the majority ethnic group in Afghanistan and dominated

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<sup>186</sup> Kyung Cho Chung., 28.

<sup>187</sup> Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 56.

<sup>188</sup> Gregorian, 40.

<sup>189</sup> Dupree, 126.

<sup>190</sup> Gregorian, 41.

<sup>191</sup> Dupree, 127.

the ruling class since its modern beginnings in 1747. Thus, when US advisors promoted the incorporation of other ethnic groups and women into the security forces, these changes were an affront to the inflexible tribal code.

Afghan observance of a radical form of Islamic *sharia* law, provided another barrier to progress for the ANSF. Until the Soviet occupation, starting in the late 1970's, Islam occupied an important role in society, but the practice of the religion was generally moderate.<sup>192</sup> It was not a barrier against modernization. However, the conflict to expel the USSR and eventual rise of the Taliban out of the tribal chaos that ensued made Afghanistan ripe for the emergence of a radical form of Islam that branded itself a counterpoint to the West.<sup>193</sup> This form of Islam that would become popular, especially within the Pashtun community, would introduce a set of practices to the culture that made it highly resistant to US advisors.

Gaining popularity during the debilitating tribal fighting that followed the Soviet withdrawal, the Taliban served as an Islamic government that enforced a harsh version of *sharia* law on Afghans. The Taliban recruited the youth disaffected by extreme poverty and displaced by war, then indoctrinated them in religious schools, called madrassas, with their radical interpretation of the Muslim faith.<sup>194</sup> The brand of Islam taught in the madrassas was “more austere...than the ones practiced in the mountains,” and promoted the belief that Islam was the supreme over all other faiths and they had a duty to fight in order to spread their faith.<sup>195</sup> The Taliban positioned their version of Islam as the only force against “Western political, economic and cultural domination.”<sup>196</sup> Although many non-Pashtuns rejected the Taliban teachings as

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<sup>192</sup> Misra, 65.

<sup>193</sup> Amalendu Misra, *Afghanistan: A Labyrinth of Violence* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004), 59.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

heresy, the anti-Western agenda resonated with the many rural Pashtuns.<sup>197</sup> Because they were engaged in counterinsurgency, the ANSF sought to influence the Afghan population. However, the US advisors who promoted Western changes within the ANSF created a destructive dissonance that helped drive a wedge between the ANSF and the population they sought to influence, thereby inhibiting the ability of the ANSF to improve its capability.

## **Comparing Responses to the West**

The cultural practices and values of Korea and Afghanistan contributed to their reaction to US advisory efforts. Korea's cultural practices, shaped by a blend of Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, and ancient Shinkyo influences, primed them to accommodate the Western-style changes that KMAG promoted. Afghanistan's tribal and Islamic practices closed the ANSF to many of the changes NTM-A sought to make, and contributed to their slow development towards greater competence and independence. The historical response of each culture to the West provides means for confirming or casting doubt upon the hypothesis that Korean culture was soft, and Afghanistan's culture was hard. By examining the response of Korean and Afghan culture to previous Western exposure, it is possible to see whether those experiences were consistent with the response to the US advisors.

While Korea had a mixed experience with the West prior to the arrival of US advisors, its negative experience with the Japanese during the occupation created cultural conditions that influenced the people to accept US-styled progress. In contrast, Afghanistan's experience of being caught between British and Russian colonial powers, beating back modernization attempts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and being occupied by the Soviet Union foreshadowed their unenthusiastic response to US advisors after the fall of the Taliban.

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 78.

## Korea

Korea initially rejected overtures from the West out of fear that foreign powers would breach its autonomy, but eventually relented and the internal debate evolved into which nations should have access to them, and how much access those nations should have. The initial Christian missionaries brought their religion through the Korean embassy at the Chinese court by 1776, but the Korean elite strongly opposed their presence because, the Christian missionaries were too persistent in their opposition to the strongly held Confucian beliefs.<sup>198</sup> For the next ninety years, contact between the West and the Korea was sparse. In 1866, however, the contacts would begin to increase, especially with Western merchantmen and plundering adventurers. Koreans maintained a policy to deny diplomatic contact with outsiders and expel them as quickly as possible.<sup>199</sup> Three American expeditions occurred from 1866 and 1871, all failures in the sense that they had no clear purpose, initiated hostile contact with Koreans, and accomplished nothing except to reduce Korea's respect for American power.<sup>200</sup>

Despite the initial reluctance to accept Christianity, the missionaries brought improved education, medical care, and a sense of individual liberty to Koreans that the oppressed masses found appealing. By 1910, there were seventy-three thousand Catholic Koreans.<sup>201</sup> Even more impressive, some experts calculated that in 1910 there were as many as 360 thousand Koreans had become Protestants.<sup>202</sup> As Christian influence took root in Korea, Japanese political, military and economic dominance over Korea also grew. With only marginal interest from Great Britain and the United States, and the emergence of Japan as a modern and dominant power in the region,

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<sup>198</sup> Osgood, 203.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>201</sup> Andrew E. Kim, "A History of Christianity in Korea: From Its Troubled Beginning to Its Contemporary Success," <http://www.tparents.org/library/religion/cta/korean-christianity.htm> , (accessed September 7, 2010).

<sup>202</sup> Andrew T. Roy, *On Asia's Rim* (New York: Friendship Press, 1962), 16.

Korean eventually succumbed to Japanese domination.<sup>203</sup> By 1910, Japan officially occupied Korea and began thirty-five years of brutal control.

The Japanese thrust their own exploitative version of modernization upon the Koreans using violent, coercive measures instead of the peaceful means of missionaries. The Japanese controlled Korea by instituting Japanese military rule, shifting nearly all of Korea's wealth to Japanese control, and brutally beating back independence movements.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, Japanese rulers eventually banned the Korean language, dramatically reduced Korean educational opportunities, and mandated the adoption of the Shinto religion.<sup>205</sup> Japan sought to destroy the Korean culture and supplant it with its own.

The devastation of the Japanese occupation was still fresh in the minds of South Koreans when they had the opportunity to separate themselves from Japan and fall under the protection of the United States. Although, Christianity's popularity started slow and stalled under the Japanese occupation, it was a far more palatable choice than the other options. When KMAG began advising the ROKA, South Koreans, who had already begun accepting Western religious ideals, were ready to assimilate other cultural practices associated with US military advice.

## Afghanistan

While the South Korean experience with the West was mixed, it was a welcome change when compared to Japanese rule. In contrast, Afghan experiences with the West were predominantly negative. The Afghan introduction to the West came at the beginning of the nineteenth century, amidst a time of internal turmoil. At this time of Afghan vulnerability, Great Britain and Russia became involved in Afghan affairs, each seeking to make Afghanistan an ally

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>204</sup> Kyung Cho Chung, *Korea Tomorrow*, 171-173.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 173-176.

and buffer state between their colonial holdings.<sup>206</sup> British attempts to manipulate Afghan leadership and control Afghan politics led to the first Anglo-Afghan War from 1839 to 1842. After some initial success, the British-installed leader, Shah Shujah, failed to attain enough legitimacy in the eyes of the tribes.<sup>207</sup> After a series of rebellions forced the British to leave Afghanistan, Ghilzai marauders decimated the convoy of British soldiers and civilians.<sup>208</sup> After a brief period of chaos, Dost Mohammed returned from exile and began to cobble his kingdom together, based partially on the unity that evolved out of defeating the British.<sup>209</sup> The story of defeating the British invasion became part of Afghan lore that helped solidify the hatred Afghans held for the West.<sup>210</sup>

After two decades of consolidating power, both Afghanistan and Britain resumed their confrontation in the Second Anglo-Afghan War from 1878 to 1880. In the interim, Afghan rulers Dost Mohammed and his son Sher Ali took steps to unify and lay a foundation for modernization. On the other side, Great Britain improved its position through conquests of lands that abutted the Pashtun regions to the south and east.<sup>211</sup> The Second Anglo-Afghan War began with a series of diplomatic blunders made by Great Britain with Afghanistan during its “Great Game” posturing with Russia.<sup>212</sup> Both sides, upset at perceived insults, went to war. Sher Ali’s army was more loyal to its tribal chiefs than to Ali and was no match for the British forces, now armed with machine guns. Sher Ali attempted left Afghanistan for Russia to plea for assistance, but the Russians refused him passage across the border and Ali died in 1879.<sup>213</sup> However, the British

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<sup>206</sup> Wahab and Youngerman, 81.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



could not sustain its success against the tribal militias. Thus, when the nephew of Sher Ali, Abdur Rahman Khan, presented himself as a powerful leader who was suspicious of the Russians, the British supported his rise to the throne.<sup>214</sup> The tribal success and rise of Abdur Rahman Khan etched Afghan hostility toward the West and feelings of invincibility deeper into its cultural narrative.

Abdur Rahman Khan earned his nickname, “the iron emir,” through brutal treatment of tribal leaders and mullahs that successfully curbed their power and provided stability in Afghanistan.<sup>215</sup> His harsh consolidation of power gave him credibility with foreign powers, and led to the successful transfer of power to his son, Habibullah Khan, in 1901.<sup>216</sup> Abdur Rahman Khan’s success also set the conditions for the reforms that Habibullah Khan would make from 1901 to 1919. Habibullah loosened the stranglehold on the tribal and religious leaders and permitted pan-Islamic reforms modeled on the Turkish system, to take place. However, the reforms only took place among the ruling elites with the rural majority remaining tribal and resistant to the modernization.<sup>217</sup> Amanullah Khan picked up where his father left off, but sought reforms far too aggressively, attempting to force the modernization on the tribes. The tribes revolted in 1929, leaving Afghanistan once again in a state of chaos.<sup>218</sup>

Nadir Shah, former commander of the Afghan military, rose out of the tribal conflict to become the new Afghan king in September 1929. He combined brutal tactics and bribery to quell rebellion. He abolished the Amanullah reforms and sought to modernize slowly, and where it was feasible.<sup>219</sup> After Nadir Shah’s assassination in 1933, his son Zahir Shah became king,

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>216</sup> Wahab and Youngerman, 96-97.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 99-101.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 106-108.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

preferred to defer power to a prime minister. From 1933 to 1973, two of Zahir Shah's uncles, his cousin Daoud Khan, and a more liberal served as prime minister.<sup>220</sup> During this time Afghan leadership pursued modernization in varying degrees, but generally slowly and mindful of the sensibilities of the rural Pashtun tribes.<sup>221</sup> Despite some minor successes, conflict with Pakistan, famine, corruption, and US assistance sidetracked by Vietnam, prevented modernization efforts from producing meaningful change throughout the country and outside of the elite.<sup>222</sup> The failures further deepened the mistrust that the Afghan people had of modernization.

In 1973, Muhammed Daoud Khan successfully ended his cousin's reign and, Zahir's cousin took over as prime minister and president of Afghanistan and 1973.<sup>223</sup> His leadership alienated both the tribal leadership and the more liberal elites, eventually leading to a successful communist coup in 1978.<sup>224</sup> Shortly after that, the USSR began its decade-long military operation in Afghanistan. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was catastrophic to the USSR and a period of great suffering for the Afghan people who, once again reinforcing their hatred of outside intervention from Westernized powers. By the mid-1980s a third of the Afghan population was living in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran, under the control of radical Islamist mullahs.<sup>225</sup> The mullahs successfully radicalized much of the already disenfranchised population and created an Afghan institution driven by its anti-Western, Islamic ideology.<sup>226</sup>

The histories of Afghanistan and Korea hold critical differences that created environments for advising that were polar opposites. The brutal Japanese occupation of Korea for over fifty years made the Koreans willing to seek progress that separated them from their

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 112-113, 120-121.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 121-128.

<sup>223</sup> Wahab and Youngerman, 129.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 130-133.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 171.

traumatic recent past. The US advisors offered a Western approach, distinct from Japan's, that satisfied their need for uniqueness. Conversely, Afghanistan's tumultuous historical experience with the West was as a people manipulated by powerful Western forces during the Great Game between Britain and Russia, and then again later, by the Soviet Union. During this time, they experienced several governmental attempts to modernize in a Western fashion, some of them accompanied with tremendous violence, all of them involving a dramatic assault on their cultural values. This negative experience with the West contributed to a tainted Afghan view of US advisors through a lens of suspicion.

### **An Afghan Tortoise and a Korean Hare: Hard and Soft Acculturation**

South Korean and Afghan cultures played a key role in the outcome of the advisor efforts. South Korea possessed cultural practices and values that predisposed it to accept outside influence. Additionally, South Korea's brutal Japanese occupation added to their desire for Western help and associated cultural influence. These conditions helped make the ROKA a malleable organization, ready to accept the changes promoted by KMAG advisors. In Afghanistan, the cultural practices, values and experience with the West predisposed the people to approach US presence with caution and the ANSF to accept NTM-A advice with trepidation. These cultural factors, combined with the increased degree of difficulty of the Afghan security situation allowed KMAG to achieve its success faster than NTM-A. One might say that the South Korean ROKA was like a hare. Its culture was soft and open to US advice and its development adopted a fast pace. In contrast, the Afghan ANSF was like a tortoise. Its culture was hard and resistant to US advisors, so its progress towards developing a viable and independent security force was slow.

### **Conclusions**

The comparison of KMAG and NTM-A advisory efforts allows for conclusions in four areas. First, it is possible to explain why KMAG was able to complete its mission faster than

NTM-A. Second, it is possible to make some general recommendations for how IJC and NTM-A should continue to approach advisory operations in Afghanistan. Third, one can make some general conclusions about what military leaders must know in order to conduct successful advisory operations. Lastly, it is possible to make some recommendations for what leaders should do to prepare the US military so that it is postured to succeed in advisory roles.

The comparison of the KMAG and NTM-A situations revealed that the complex threat that the Afghans faced, combined with an Afghan culture that predisposed the ANSF to resist the recommendations of US advisors, led to the slower progress of the ANSF. In contrast, the ROKA faced a conventional threat and possessed a culture that predisposed them to assimilate KMAG advice rapidly. The key factors that predisposed each indigenous force were the ethnic composition, cultural practices and historical experience with the West and modernization. Afghanistan's heterogeneous ethnic make-up, cultural resistance to Western advice, and its negative historical experience with modernization and Western powers made the ANSF wary of their US counterparts and slow to adapt their forces. Korea was the exact opposite. It was ethnically homogeneous, its cultural practices made them open to adaptation, and its negative experience with Japan made them eager to adopt American methods. Ultimately, these factors allowed the ROKA to adapt quickly to their threat, while the ANSF, with its more challenging enemy, progressed more slowly along a much longer path to success.

The analysis of the two advisory efforts reveals that the road to success in Afghanistan will be long, given the complex threat, and that continued Afghan cultural resistance will ensure that the rate of development will be slow. Armed with this knowledge, it is possible to make some recommendations for how the advisory effort in Afghanistan should adapt in order to account for the threat and cultural conditions. NTM-A and the IJC currently share the advising responsibilities in Afghanistan, with NTM-A advising the developmental and institutional apparatus of the ANSF while IJC oversees operational advising. In both cases, the US advisors seek to make the relationship more of a partnership with Afghans taking the lead as much as

possible. As noted earlier, this is a positive step because it results in a greater interaction between the ANSF and the US military forces. Some studies of cross-cultural military interaction indicate that the more integrated the force, the better the cooperation. With more interaction, both advisor and advisee developed greater sympathy for the other and are able to overlook and ultimately overcome their ethnocentric or biased perceptions of the other.<sup>227</sup> Another study indicates that a way of overcoming cultural gaps and improving integration between military forces is through joint exercises, internal divisions of labor, deliberate leadership and cohesion building, and sharing of knowledge.<sup>228</sup> US advisors should seek opportunities to increase the integration of the two forces, but treat the relationship as a true partnership, with US military leaders sensitive to the cultural constraints of the ANSF and the Afghan people. It would be a mistake to press for progress too rapidly. Such progress would risk the effort's legitimacy and alienate the very populace the ANSF is attempting to influence. The last recommendation for the effort in Afghanistan is that, as the concept of "partnership" develops and finds its way into military doctrine, it should include the importance of cultural understanding, especially in terms of how quickly, or slowly, the culture will allow the indigenous force to accept change.

The comparison of KMAG and NTM-A provides some insights into what leaders must know in order to conduct successful advisory operations in general. First, leaders must recognize that advisory efforts are complex endeavors and many factors can affect the outcome. Generally, it is useful for leaders to consider the threat, the current state of security force, and the speed with which that security force can adapt and improve to meet the threat. The nature of the threat, as it compares to the current state of the security forces helps to determine the "degree of difficulty"

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<sup>227</sup> Rene Moelker, Joseph Soeters, and Ulrich vom Hagen, "Sympathy, the Cement of Interoperability: Findings on Ten Years of German-Netherlands Military Cooperation," *Armed Forces & Society* 33 (2007): 514-515 <http://afs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/3/496> (accessed April 2010)

<sup>228</sup>, Efrat Elron, Boass Shamir, and Eyal Ben-Ari, "Why Don't They Fight Each Other? Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces," *Armed Forces & Society* 26 (1999): 87-89 <http://afs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/26/1/73> (accessed April 20, 2010).

for the advisory effort. If the threat poses many different challenges, and if the security forces are relatively undeveloped, as was the case in Afghanistan, the advisory effort is going to be extremely challenging. Cultural analysis will help to determine how long it will take the indigenous force to adapt to meet the challenge. Such analysis must consider the cultural values and practices, the ethnic composition, and the historical experience of the culture with external influences similar to the one an advisory effort will present. Although anthropologist Clifford Geertz warned that cultural analysis did not impart “predictive” powers, he did assert that it gave the ability to “anticipate” the choices that people in a particular culture would make.<sup>229</sup> Being able to anticipate if progress will be rapid or slow helps senior leaders make judgments on whether or not an advisory effort is a feasible solution, given public opinion and the domestic political environment.

Cultural analysis is important for military commanders once senior leadership has committed to an advisory effort. Understanding the culture and how the indigenous force will react to advisors, helps commanders construct an effective operational design. Cultural practices and values limit what the indigenous force can reasonably achieve and should shape the development of an achievable end state and conditions for the advisory effort. Cultural understanding helps commanders anticipate the strengths and weaknesses of the indigenous force and allows them to develop the most effective approach to development and how best to prevent the effort from culminating. By understanding how the indigenous force will react to advisors, commanders can anticipate the limits of what they can change and select the tempo with which they should seek change. Finally, cultural understanding allows commanders to make sound decisions to mitigate risk and exploit success.

Unfortunately, the depth of understanding that is necessary for success does not come quickly. If political leaders continue to make advisory roles integral for the US military, then

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<sup>229</sup> Geertz, 26

military leaders must adapt the force so that it is capable of obtaining and sustaining a deep understanding of a wide range of cultures. Because it is impossible for the military to develop a deep understanding of all cultures, leaders must select the cultures that are most likely to demand military involvement. Although it is beyond the scope of this monograph to suggest how to select these cultures, it is an area for further research. For the selected cultures, military leaders must make a significant investment in order to make develop a useful level of understanding across the force. First, in a profession that demands interpersonal skills and requires frequent cross-cultural interaction, anthropology should be a part of the core academic curricula for cadets as undergraduates and as part of officer professional education. Even when military leaders do not have experience with a culture, they can at least have a general understanding of their own culture and of cultural differences. Additionally, such education would provide leaders framework for learning about culture. Ideally, in order to best prepare for future advisory efforts, a large number of leaders should gain exposure to culture and language throughout their entire military career. This exposure should start for officers when they are cadets in ROTC or service academies. Foreign language proficiency should be a requirement for every officer with routine cultural immersion programmed into academic curriculums and assignment considerations. By developing broad language capability and cultural experience within the military, the nation can develop a much more robust advisory capacity that is postured for success in a wide range of cultures.

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