

Military Operations within a Nation's Culture

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Argumentative Statement:

The understanding of cultural norms, values, beliefs, and desired conflict resolution within any theatre of operation is paramount to the success of military operations.

Abstract:

World Powers and Third World Countries have clashed throughout time. Each country has its own agenda, set by its national Interests. Whether it's the nation's wealth, religion, expansionism, or desire to increase regional security, the issues lie between the differences of ideologies and perspectives. One country's political goal may challenge another's by simple misunderstanding or poor communication. The distrust between nations is built by the failure of diplomacy, the lack of cooperation, and actions taken in converse to perceived intentions.

It is the vision of native peoples of all countries to have a sovereign nation; independent, self-governing, and free from tyranny. A nation is born through its rich heritage, vast cultures, strong beliefs, and trusted value systems. It is a collage of its past, present, and future. A nation may flourish or flounder based on its generosity and greed.

One nation's rule imposed upon another may not fall in good favor with the general population thus resulting in insurrection and conflict. A good example of this is seen during the Cuba and Philippine Islands revolts against Spain. Whereas Cuba gained its independence, the Filipinos did not. In both instances the intervention of the United States was a culmination factor [1].

Case #1 Philippines 1899-1902

Invaders versus Liberators

Within the early years of the Philippine Campaign, the strategy to win the “hearts and minds” of the Filipino people was to create municipal governments. General Order 43 (1899) and 40 (1900) accomplished this by providing military commanders the authorization and instruction to develop and administer all municipal governments.

Municipal governments consisted of a Mayor, a Town Council, and Police Force. It was paramount that the empowered municipal leaders understood the complexities of governance and the control the Filipino people. In order to facilitate oversight of civil and military matters, the US Army reorganized and located a company level garrison near many cities. This enabled the Army to accomplish Major General Merritt’s second directive from President McKinley, which was to provide security for the Philippine Islands. The first directive was to complete the reduction of Spanish power which was accomplished in in short order; the second directive would not be such an easy task, due to the operational environment and the lack of understanding of MG Merritt’s capabilities.

As political wrangling continued, Emilio Aguinaldo, the self declared Philippine leader, proclaimed the Philippine’s Declaration of Independence on June 12, 1898. This declaration was not recognized by the United States or Spain.

In late June 1898, BG Thomas Anderson’s failure to acknowledge Emilio Aguinaldo as the legitimate leader was the first spark that would lead to a continued insurgency.

The sovereignty of the Philippines was transferred in December 1898 by the signing of the Treaty of Paris. This treaty established a permanent base in the Pacific for the US. This was vital to support US Policy as President McKinley declared that our actions within the Philippines would be to protect the Philippine civilians, preserve property and individual rights, open ports to commerce, and to collect taxes [2].

Imposed American Ideology

When the Roman Catholic Church was disbanded, considerable amounts of land became available. Most land was purchased by American companies leaving little available to be bought by Filipino peasants.

Due to conflicting movements for independence and colonization and the feelings of betrayal to Emilio Aguinaldo, the Philippine and American governments experienced increased tension. A proclamation of war was issued against the US in June 1898 culminating into the Philippine-American War from 1898-1902 [3].

Throughout the war, the US used a two prong approach. As areas were pacified by military operations, the civil authorities assumed responsibility for the areas. The US maintained direct contact with the population learning their culture and eventually earning their trust and confidence. This was accomplished by improving the standards of living for the common Filipino.

Case #2: Cuban War

Winning of Hearts and Minds

With Cuba no longer under Spanish rule, Cuba needed to bring itself back to the proud nation it once was. Due to the Cuban War with Spain, the majority of the country was decimated and all governmental systems had failed.

To win the "Hearts and Minds" of the Cuban populace and to increase security on the island, the US took a multi-reorganizational approach. The US developed methods to re-energize the Cuban commerce, agriculture, and public services.

Security within the Environment

Since the local and provincial governments were bankrupt, revitalization was necessary. To accomplish this, the US aided both governments in revising the tax and

customs systems. This step afforded the economic growth required to revitalize the economy. As a fledgling new country, Cuba had to re-establish its legal system by reorganizing the courts and revise its laws.

The total breakdown of Public Services and the poor health of the general population permitted fever and disease to become rampant. The US Military immediately distributed food and medical supplies which assisted in bringing the population's health back to an acceptable level.

Other implementations made were the renovations to the Public Works System allowing for the improvements to infrastructure such as roads, bridges, sanitary systems, and buildings. With all of these reforms accomplished, a public school system was needed to ensure all reforms would take hold. Without a solid educational system in place, there would be no one educated or qualified to fill the job created [4]. All programs and reforms were financed from the Cuban Treasury [5].

Counter Argument:

One could argue that the power of today's militaries, the technological advances of weaponry, and the complexities of operations, the military planners and tacticians need only to concern themselves with the missions at hand. Another argumentative point might be that sure there will be some resistance, it is human nature to fight against change. Those resistant to change will soon see that they will be the beneficiaries. Those that are resistant lack the insight or vision to see how these changes will affect their lives.

Conclusion:

As one can see, the ability to affect change, within another nation, is through cultural shifts, situational awareness, and open communication. The ability to

understand a nation's culture, customs, people, and current global conditions, will allow for more open and direct communication with its nation's leadership. Through their elected political leaders, the nation's people are the umbilical to its prosperity and long life. Without its vast cultures, trusted values, and strong beliefs, there would not be sufficient grounds to create a new nation. It is the aggregate of these attributes, along with perseverance of its people that will develop a sovereign new nation. It is the people, who envision change and through great personal fortitude and sacrifice, that change is affected. For change to take seed, it must reflect the nation's culture, core values, norms, and the people's anticipated end desires.

Any miscalculation of these attributes will have a direct impact on military operations. Shortsightedness by any military attempting to affect change, will face a long road of travel. It will embed the seed of distrust among the elected officials, anger the general populace, and lengthen the duration of military operations. Communications will no longer be open or free.

The Golden Rule, which we learned as children, applies here. "Do unto others, as we would have those, do unto us"! [6]

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- [6] <http://bible.cc/matthew/7-12.htm>