Culture Goes to War

A Critical Analysis of the Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College, for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

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Under the Supervision of Dr. David Landy

Declaration

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Abstract

From 2003 onwards, faced with burgeoning insurgencies and widespread violence in Iraq and Afghanistan, US military policy underwent ‘a cultural turn’. This shift in policy emphasised the need for the collection of knowledge of ‘adversary culture’ in order to effectively prosecute counterinsurgency operations. This emphasis upon the value and importance of cultural knowledge set the stage for the introduction of new, non-military expert knowledge(s) into the field, culminating in the development of the Human Terrain Systems [HTS] programme. HTS deployed social scientists and academics to provide military commanders with accurate socio-cultural knowledge of populations at sites of military intervention.

Through critical engagement with the publicly available research produced by HTS and the personal lived experience of former members as recounted in their reflections on their time with the project, this study interrogates the instrumentalization of specific anthropological understandings of culture as technologies of Western military intervention. In exploring the self-understandings of researchers’ experiences in the field, the study theorizes the commitment demonstrated to the veracity of knowledge produced through the practice of social scientific research, the conceptualisation of the relationship between the researchers and their subjects, and the instrumental nature of the knowledge produced by HTS. The study then explicates the deployment of the concept of tribe during HTS research in Iraq, and analyses arguments put forward regarding the potential of traditional tribal reconciliation mechanisms and tribal governance structures to remedy sectarian violence and stabilize the country. Finally, I examine HTS research conducted in Afghanistan, and explore how critiques informed by new anthropological approaches to the culture concept problematised tribe as a unit of analysis and, in its place, offered alternative generalisable schemas to explain Afghan social organisation.

The study demonstrates that HTS discourses in Iraq and Afghanistan are informed by and serve to reproduce a crude binary distinction between an essentialised, primitive, native Other and a rational, progressive, scientific West which is reminiscent of 19th century British colonial discourses of indirect rule. Furthermore, it concludes that the pervasiveness of old anthropological approaches to culture in HTS research is a direct function of its usefulness to the realisation of military objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In doing so, this research aims to contribute to a reflexive inversion of the social scientific gaze to account for its complicity in processes of domination and intervention

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1. Introduction

1.1 Cultural Proclivities

> Cultural knowledge and warfare are inextricably bound. Knowledge of one's adversary as a means to improve military prowess has been sought since Herodotus studied his opponents' conduct during the Persian Wars (490–479 BC). T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) embarked on a similar quest after the 1916 Arab rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, immersing himself deeply in local culture… *Culture* has become something of a DOD buzzword, but does it really matter? The examples below demonstrate three points: misunderstanding culture at a strategic level can produce policies that exacerbate an insurgency; a lack of cultural knowledge at an operational level can lead to negative public opinion; and ignorance of the culture at a tactical level endangers both civilians and troops. There is no doubt that the lack of adversary cultural knowledge can have grave consequences strategically, operationally, and tactically (Montgomery McFate 2005b:42-44).

In the mid-2000s, American cultural anthropologist – and then defence policy fellow at the US Office for Naval Research – Montgomery McFate, published a series of combative research papers across a number of US military journals outlining her arguments for the strategic importance of 'cultural knowledge' to the realisation of US military objectives in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (see McFate 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d). The above extract – taken from one of these articles entitled 'The Military Utility of Adversary Culture' – succinctly captures some of the central pitfalls McFate suggests can result from a failure to adequately know and understand the culture of your enemy. As McFate herself observes, the general idea of 'knowing one's enemy' dates back thousands of years as a staple principle of warfare, and long predates the existence of anything resembling contemporary academic understandings of a 'culture' concept. Yet

it is knowing the enemy in terms of their *culture* which takes on particular salience in the late modern moment. In this article, McFate cites one particular example of the danger of failing to adequately understand the culture of the adversary that really stuck out in my mind. She argued that:

> Failure to understand adversary culture can endanger both troops and civilians at a tactical level. Although it may not seem like a priority when bullets are flying, cultural ignorance can kill (McFate 2005b:44).

The notion that cultural knowledge has the potential to not only save American military lives, but also the lives of Afghans and Iraqis, is a recurrent feature of these arguments. It allows social scientists to frame their participation in the collection and refinement of such knowledge as a benevolent contribution to force reduction and mitigation of unnecessary violence. However, the example McFate chose to illustrate this raised more questions than it answered for me. McFate constructs her argument with reference to the experience of US military personnel on the ground in Iraq:

> Earlier this year, the Office of Naval Research conducted a number of focus groups with Marines returning from Iraq. The Marines were quick to acknowledge their misunderstanding of Iraqi culture, particularly pertaining to physical culture and local symbols, and point to the consequences of inadequate training. Most alarming were the Iraqis' use of vehement hand gestures, their tendency to move in one's peripheral vision, and their tolerance for physical closeness. One Marine noted, "We had to train ourselves that this was not threatening. But we had our fingers on the trigger all the time because they were yelling" (McFate 2005b:44).

On the surface, McFate's interpretation appears relatively straightforward. Military personnel lacking familiarity with local culture were misinterpreting benign cues as threats, which resulted in unnecessary violence and civilian casualties. For McFate, accurate cultural knowledge could help protect both the soldiers and the local population in these situations. However, this example just did not sit correctly with me. Perhaps one could speak of 'cultural' propensity to use hand gestures, or differential 'cultural norms' regarding appropriate physical proximity, but a culturally determined proclivity to move

in one's peripheral vision? At best, this appears nonsensical. At worst, it evokes some of the more insidious racialised tropes at the heart of Western Orientalist representations of the Middle East and the Arab. A contemporary academic paper published by a trained anthropologist casually including this trope as an example of an Iraqi cultural tendency was jarring. The image of figures moving in one's peripheral vision evokes representations of sly, skulking, and devious figures moving in the shadows. Even more insidiously, this resonates with Nazi anti-Semitic stereotypes portraying Jews as rodents and vermin. Said draws a direct line between early 20th century European anti-Semitism and contemporary anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racisms. He illustrates this with reference to 1970s depictions of Arab oil sheiks and representations of Arabs in Western cinema.

> These Arabs, however, were clearly "Semitic": their sharply hooked noses, the evil moustachioed leer on their faces, were obvious reminders (to a largely non-Semitic population) that "Semites" were at the bottom of all our troubles…The Arab is associated with either lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversexed de generate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low. Slave trader, camel driver, moneychanger, colorful scoundrel: these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema (Said 2003:285-287).

A more contemporary example of dehumanising, racialised imagery representing Arabs as both shadowy figures sneaking in the periphery, and also as rats scurrying along the ground, was a controversial 2015 cartoon published in the Daily Mail which professed to be depicting Europe's 'Open Borders and the Free Movement of People' (Daily Mail 2015). The overtly racist cartoon depicts silhouettes of racialised Semitic figures - clearly representing Muslim immigrants – crossing the European border carrying children and rifles, and beneath their feet scurry multiple rats crossing the border alongside them. Within the context of this wider regime of Orientalist, anti-Arab racism, the suggestion that Iraqi people have a culturally determined tendency to move in one's peripheral vision cannot be dismissed as simply a product of poor scholarship. If this, as McFate suggests, is an exemplar of the type of 'cultural knowledge' needed by the military, then what precisely does she mean by 'culture'? And how can we understand the role of the academic expert in the production of such knowledge? This thesis takes these questions as its starting point, and sets out to examine the role of cultural knowledge as a technology of US military intervention in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

1.2 Introduction

In the decades following the Vietnam War, the concept of culture was conspicuously absent from the lexicon of the US military. During the war, the controversial CORDS/Phoenix program – a CIA led cultural intelligence and counterinsurgency program which collated and analysed 'local information' with a view to targeting members of the Viet-Cong infrastructure – was responsible for the incarceration and assassination of thousands of Vietnamese (Gonzalez 2008). Between 1967 and 1972, over 26,000 suspected Viet Cong, including many civilians, were killed as a result of the program 'in acts that amounted to war crimes' (Gonzalez 2008:26). The 1960's also saw the US intelligence agencies deploying anthropologists to Thailand as part of counterinsurgency efforts, and anthropologists and many other social scientists were involved in the scandal surrounding the proposed Project Camelot – a US military led social engineering programme designed to support US geopolitical objectives in Latin America (Gonzalez 2007, Gusterson 2003). According to Hugh Gusterson, these controversies directly led the American Anthropological Association [AAA] to draft and adopt its formal code of ethics in 1971 (Gusterson 2003) and the fallout from the decade led to a souring of the historically strong relationship between the US military and the social sciences (CEAUSSIC). In the following years, culture as an instrument of warfare all but disappeared from US military doctrine. The 'modern American way of war' which emerged during this period was rooted in the Weinberger-Powell doctrine of overwhelming force – foregrounding the principals of force superiority and conventional kinetic engagement as the foundations of US military strategy (Gregory 2008:1). This doctrine dominated US military strategy in the remaining of decades of the 20th century, and this remained so at the turn of the 21st century when the US embarked upon its 'War on Terror' in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

American military discourse of the 1990s saw a refinement of this overwhelming force approach to incorporate a specific focus upon technological innovation. This development in strategy is referred to as the Revolution in Military Affairs [RMA] (Porter 2007:47). According to Patrick Porter:

> The RMA envisaged a future in which the American colossus would prevail against armies in the field by exploiting its strengths, such as

> information and knowledge of the battlespace, precision munitions, rapid mobility, and decision-making (Porter 2007:47).

Donald Rumsfeld – US secretary of defence at time of the 9/11 attacks - was profoundly influenced by the principals of the RMA. The Pentagon's strategies for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq clearly reflected Rumsfeld's very particular vision for the US military. This philosophy – which would later become known as the Rumsfeld doctrine – was characterized by:

> a narrow "shock and awe" approach to war-fighting, emphasizing technology, long-range firepower, and spectacular displays of force (Packer 2006).

The Rumsfeld doctrine sought to minimize physical troop deployments by leveraging the US military's assumed technological superiority to rapidly overwhelm the enemy with bombardment from afar. Both the invasions of Afghanistan, and that of Iraq, enjoyed considerable initial success. The US led invasion of Afghanistan commenced with Operation Enduring Freedom on the 7th of October 2001, and within three months the US and its allies had overthrown the Taliban regime whilst suffering only 12 total casualties (Jones 2008:7). The invasion of Iraq was similarly efficient; Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced on the 20th of March 2003, and by May 1st US President George Bush had given his now infamous 'Mission Accomplished' speech in which he declared an end to 'major combat operations', and victory for the US and their allies in the 'Battle of Iraq' (CBS 2003). However, these successes were short lived, and in addition to being faced with resurgent Taliban resistance in Southern Afghanistan, by 2004 US political leaders were taken aback by the burgeoning Iraqi insurgency (McFate & Laurence 2015:3) which was threatening US state-building efforts and pushing the country towards civil war (Porter 2007:47). Patrick Porter observes that while:

> Designed for conventional battles, surgical invasion and withdrawal, and swift, overwhelming strikes, America's military was unprepared for the post invasion disorder in Iraq, and the intimacy of prolonged contact with a complex foreign society (Porter 2007:47).

In 2006, then Lieutenant General David Petraeus – who would go on to appointed as General in command of all US forces in Iraq in 2007 – published a widely read article in the Military Review Journal which openly conceded this point. Petraeus wrote:

> The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan were not, in truth, the wars for which we were best prepared in 2001; however, they are the wars we are fighting and they clearly are the kind of wars we must master (Petraeus 2006:2 quoted in McFate & Laurence 2015:3).

In light of these challenges, US military objectives in Afghanistan and Iraq were radically altered; US and coalition forces in both countries were now faced with the prospect of protracted counterinsurgency operations to counteract the emerging and ongoing resistance to their presence. The task of nation-building and the installation of new state structures necessitated the pacification of insurgency, the stabilization of the security situation, and, in the case of Iraq, the prevention of full-scale civil war. It was within this context that US military policy underwent a radical transformation which Derek Gregory and Patrick Porter refer to as 'the cultural turn in late modern war' (Porter 2007, Gregory 2008). The 'cultural turn' broadly refers to a generalised revitalisation of interest in the culture concept among US military planners, and the rediscovery of what Montgomery McFate describes as 'the military utility of understanding adversary culture' (McFate 2005b). A thorough genealogical exploration of the cultural turn is neither practicable within the confines of this thesis, nor necessary in light of the substantive contributions of others to this task [see Gregory 2008, Porter 2007]. The most comprehensive of these contributions is undoubtedly contained in Derek Gregory's seminal 2008 article 'The Rush to the Intimate' published in Radical Philosophy journal. Gregory charts the trajectory of the cultural turn by providing a basic chronology of the re-emergence of the interest in culture – from early concerns expressed by troops on the ground regarding the negative outcomes of their lack of familiarity with the cultural contexts in which they found themselves, to embedded journalists picking up upon these concerns and relaying them in their writing, and to the eventual adoption of these narratives by key decision-makers within the military establishment. In addition to this important chronological overview, Gregory also provides a deeper analysis of the discursive and conceptual arguments which brought about the cultural turn. In doing so he identifies the key figures driving the shift in policy, and details the events and intellectual groundwork which informed the [re]turn to culture. Foremost among these

figures was Montgomery McFate, whose contribution would ultimately culminate in the establishment of the Human Terrain System [HTS].

Gregory's analysis demonstrates how the push towards culture was driven by a wave of voices from both within and without the military establishment. Between influential voices within the military such as Major General Robert Scales, editorial lines in major American newspapers, feedback from troops on the ground and the interventions of military adjacent academic voices such as McFate, there was almost unanimous recognition of the need to incorporate culture into the US military's arsenal in Iraq and Afghanistan. McFate comments that:

> In the highly charged political environment of Washington DC, the need to improve the military's level of cultural knowledge was a noncontroversial, non-partisan issue upon which everyone could agree. Internal criticism about the military's lack of knowledge was acceptable in a way that outright opposition to the war was not: it was bipartisan, nobody in particular was to blame, and it was true (2015:66).

However, while consensus may have existed regarding the need to develop the military's cultural knowledge capacity, there was considerable disagreement regarding how this would best be achieved. This disagreement largely centred around where the requisite expertise and skills should be developed and located, and would remain a constant point of contention throughout the cultural turn. Some prominent voices within the military were adamant that any cultural knowledge capacity needed to be developed in-house, with a view to equipping as many military personnel as possible with the skills needed to prosecute counterinsurgency in a culturally sensitive manner. Rochelle Davis observes that:

> Beginning in 2005, the U.S military developed new programs designed to address issues of culture. Building on experiences of the well-respected Defense Language Institute, each branch of the military either established new bodies or enhanced the capacity of existing ones to produce cultural training materials, with a specialized training for officers and more general training for enlisted personnel (Davis 2014:794).

In the early stages of the war, the in-house approach to cultural knowledge was extremely crude and largely involved providing troops with reductive content knowledge in the form of smart cards and cultural handbooks (Davis 2010). Davis decries this early approach to culture as crude and counterproductive and suggests that it is rooted in mistaken assumptions of unified national character which are fundamentally inaccurate. With the cultural turn, Davis explains, emerged new, more sophisticated approaches to fostering cultural awareness among military personnel. The most significant development was the emergence of what Allison Abbe and Stanley Halpin referred to as 'cross-cultural competence' [3C] (Davis 2010:13). This approach eschewed culture training which focused upon imparting specific content knowledge about a particular theatre of operation, and instead emphasised the need to equip soldiers with a generalised cultural competency which would enable them to negotiate culture on-the-go in a variety of different settings. The 3C approach involved knowledge, affect and skills which would:

> combine to provide capabilities required to work in a foreign culture. Knowledge begins with an awareness of one's own culture and cultural differences, but has to progress towards an increasingly complex understanding of the sources, manifestations and consequences of a particular culture. Affect includes attitudes towards foreign cultures and the motivation to learn about and engage with them. Skills encompass the ability to regulate one's own reactions in a cross-cultural setting, interpersonal skills and the flexibility to assume the perspective of someone from a different culture (Abbe and Halpin 2009:21-22 quoted in Davis 2010:13).

Perhaps the most combative case for in-house cultural competency can be found in a 2009 paper by Marine Corps area officer Major Ben Connable entitled 'All Our Eggs in a Broken Basket: how the Human Terrain System is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence'. The paper is an attack on the outsourcing of cultural competence to civilian contractors and academic experts, and details Connable's views on the conceptual and operational flaws of the Human Terrain System. He suggests that outsourcing cultural capacity functions has not only failed, but it has directly hampered the development of more effective cultural competence among troops on the ground and

the military's existing intelligence functions. Outsourcing culture, according to Connable, is a quick fix which inhibits the long-term incorporation of culture into military operations.

While the intellectual trajectory of these in-house approaches to cultural competence is undoubtedly interesting, it is not the focus of the research at hand. Rather, this research will centre upon the competing approach to building cultural knowledge capacity – the recruitment of the academic specialist. The so-called cultural turn in US military policy in Afghanistan and Iraq must be situated within the context of a more general 'cultural turn' in the social and human sciences in the latter decades of the 20th century. From the 1970s onwards, the humanities and social sciences underwent a so called 'theory revolution', which challenged long held positivist epistemological assumptions, and foregrounded the concept of culture in explaining the way in which the contemporary world can be both understood and produced (Armstrong 2001). Central to this is the idea, as articulated by Nancy Armstrong, that:

> no form of cultural representation ever simply reproduces what it represents; it always produces that person, place or thing, as such. This principal forecloses any possibility that we can encounter anything, either subject or object, that has not already been mediated by culture. This, simply put, is the logic of the cultural turn (Armstrong 2001:18).

For many scholars, this cultural turn has been 'one of the most influential trends in the humanities and social sciences in the last generation' (Jacobs & Spillman 2005:1). Kate Nash describes the cultural turn in social theory as composed of two distinct but interrelated forms:

> Firstly, the idea that culture is universally constitutive of social relations and identities. I shall refer to this as the 'epistemological' case for culture. Secondly, the claim that *in contemporary society* culture plays an unprecedented role in constituting social relations and identities. I shall call this the 'historical' case for culture. Where the epistemological case is based on theoretical considerations, the historical case is empirical, concerning historical changes in social life. In practice,

> however, these claims overlap in the application of the 'cultural turn' to studies of contemporary social life' (Nash 2001:78).

The cultural turn has been profoundly influential across an array of disciplines in the human and social sciences including anthropology, geography, sociology, literary studies, film studies and many more, whilst also contributing to the emergence of new disciplines such as cultural studies and postcolonial studies. In terms of the research at hand, perhaps the most significant influence of the cultural turn can be seen in the fields of peace studies and conflict resolution. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, orthodox state-based understandings of war and conflict have been on the wane, and in their stead, late modern conflict is most often conceptualised and understood in terms of primordial enmities and clashes between incongruent ethnic and cultural identities. These approaches characterise late modern warfare as a distinctly communal phenomenon, which suggests it 'involves the mobilization of group identities, its perpetrators and victims act as proxies for group interests, and it is embedded in the social structure in which it takes place' (Brewer 2010:12). According to Andrew Finlay, this communal understanding of violence has informed the emergence of new approaches to conflict resolution in recent decades. These scholars, who Finlay refers to as 'critical interventionists' are:

> not opposed to liberal intervention as such, but merely worry that actually existing intervention tends to fail because it is top-heavy with 'Western' ideas of 'good governance' and lacks an 'anthropological sensitivity' to the communal nature of the local, indigenous identities and practices implicated in conflict (Finlay 2015:224).

The solution proposed by these critical interventionists is the introduction of expert knowledges into the field in the form of human sciences – in particular, anthropology and sociology – with the requisite expertise to analyse and understand the communal dynamics at play and facilitate a more culturally sensitive approach to the resolution of conflict. Finlay problematises the critical interventionists' conceptualisation of the relationship between culture and communal conflict, and 'questions the role assigned by them to the anthropologist/sociologist, i.e. as expert in the 'communal' and translator of indigenous culture to the international purveyors of "good governance'' (Finlay 2015:224). Rather than viewing 'communalism' as an alternative to the liberal 'good governance' approach to peace, he suggests that the projection of communal and

cultural understandings of conflict function instrumentally as one of its foremost techniques.

It is in the above context that we arrive at the key dimension of the cultural turn which forms the central focus of this research project – the role of the academic expert in the provision of cultural knowledge in the prosecution of US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In contrast to the 3C approach of Abbe and Halpin, and the case for the development of internal cultural knowledge capacity exemplified by Connable, others believed that to produce accurate and complete cultural knowledge of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US military would need to defer to outside expertise. These arguments were predicated on a remarkably similar division of labour to that proposed by the 'critical interventionists' explored in the previous paragraph. Anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists were seen to possess the unique methodological tools and expertise necessary to translate the cultures of Afghanistan and Iraq in a manner that was digestible and usable to the US military. Derek Gregory captures this perspective in relaying the position of journalist George Packer who suggested:

> **social science could help redefine the 'war on terror' as a global counterinsurgency** and thus direct attention away from the diffuse, shape-shifting spectre of pervasive Terror – which the Bush administration had found so rhetorically convenient – **towards a more practical engagement with the norms and forms of specific adversaries with their own 'structure, meaning, agency'** (Gregory 2008:3 Emphasis Added).

The case for the involvement of non-military, academic experts in the collection and refinement of socio-cultural knowledge is exemplified by the arguments put forward by Montgomery McFate. McFate's general argument for the military need for culture is a familiar one. It posits the existence of a cultural knowledge deficit in the US military approach in Afghanistan and Iraq, and suggests that the force superiority approach of the Rumsfeld doctrine was ill-suited to the type of conflicts the US military was embroiled in.

> Primarily because traditional methods of warfighting have proven inadequate in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S technology, training, and

> doctrine designed to counter the Soviet threat are not designed for low-intensity counterinsurgency operations where civilians mingle freely with combatants in complex urban terrain (McFate 2005a:24).

This argues that the technology driven 'shock and awe' strategy was not appropriate for the specific demands of counterinsurgency, where 'winning through overwhelming force is often inapplicable as a concept, if not problematic as a goal' (McFate 2005a:27). This is further complicated by the indeterminate nature of the enemy and negotiating the often-shifting subject positions of insurgent and civilian. McFate comments that 'unlike conventional major combat operations, counterinsurgency must be conducted, among, and hopefully with the support of an indigenous civilian population' (McFate 2010:191). Within this frame, cultural knowledge becomes important as a mechanism through which the military can distinguish between enemy and civilian. Markus Kienscherf saliently identifies this process as the way in which:

> counterinsurgency doctrine aims to harness sociocultural knowledge in order to conduct a form of triage between elements of targeted populations, and how the divisions on which such a triage is based are inscribed into space by means of practices that derive from earlier methods of imperial policing (Kienscherf 2011:519).

In this way, according to Kienscherf, the ultimate role of socio-cultural knowledge in counterinsurgency is the 'production and implementation of biopolitical differentiation between 'safe' and 'dangerous' life (Kienscherf 2011:519).

In direct opposition to arguments for the in-house provision of cultural knowledge capacity, McFate believed it necessary to defer to social scientists with the appropriate training and expertise to carry out research in the field. In particular, McFate believed that her own discipline of anthropology was best positioned to provide this function. Gregory explains how McFate set out her case in a series of essays in which she:

> called on anthropology to set aside its 'self-flagellation' –its colonial guilt and its modish 'postmodernism' – and to reclaim rather than repudiate its historical role 'to consolidate imperial power at the

> margins of empire'. In her view 'cultural knowledge and warfare are inextricably bound,' and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq demanded nothing less than 'an immediate transformation in the military conceptual paradigm' infused by the discipline that she said was 'invented to support warfighting in the tribal zone': anthropology. (Gregory 2008:23).

McFate's arguments regarding the necessity to outsource cultural knowledge capacity to the social sciences has two distinct dimensions – the need to overcome ethnocentric bias and the perils of incomplete knowledge (Dunne 2013). Firstly, McFate contends that military organisations, and individual military personnel, have a propensity for ethnocentric bias when operating outside of their own cultural contexts (McFate 2010). She defines ethnocentrism as:

> as an intellectual fallacy in which one's own group is seen as the centre of the universe, with other groups judged in relation and found lacking. It is also a synonym for being 'culture bound', or lacking the ability to see the world from the eyes of a different culture or nation. Put simply, ethnocentrism means to fail to empathise with the viewpoints or experiences of other social groups (McFate 2010:198).

These ethnocentric biases, according to McFate, inhibit the ability of military personnel to conceptualise adversary culture outside of preconceived, stereotypical representations. She contends that:

> many soldiers who deploy to foreign countries have little prior knowledge regarding political or social conditions, except for reports glimpsed on television and scanned in the newspapers, and their views often reflect the stereotypes found in popular culture (McFate 2010:198).

This tendency is further exacerbated by the animosity inherent in violent conflict, and the feelings of enmity generated between parties engaged in combat. McFate contends that 'military strategy depends upon knowing the enemy, yet [bad] counterinsurgency promotes cultural constructions of the enemy which may involve ethnocentric vilification

(McFate 1994:ii). Citing Ken Booth, McFate suggests that in the context of regular warfare, this tendency toward ethnocentric vilification can be useful to the military insofar as it can serve to 'make killing easier' (McFate 2010:199, Dunne 2013:23). She observes how:

> in a conflict such as World War 1, where repeated, systematic, intimate killing was expected from soldiers, the vilification of the human offered the possibility of moral distancing through the objectification and dehumanisation of the enemy (McFate 2010:199).

But while this dehumanisation can be functional insofar as it promotes 'easier killing', McFate argues that counterinsurgency is predicated upon the capacity 'to understand the insurgent's motivation… the breaking down of ethnocentrism among the military force, and the development of true cross-cultural understanding' (McFate 2010:199).

For McFate, the military's tendency towards ethnocentric bias makes it unsuited to the collection and analysis of accurate socio-cultural knowledge of adversary and host populations. Unlike social scientists who are equipped with the requisite training and methodological tools necessary to conduct thorough and verifiable cultural research:

> military units who decide to conduct their own social science research often stumble along, making serious yet basic research mistakes. (Brereton 2015:268)

For McFate, while a lack of cultural knowledge can pose major difficulties for units engaged in counterinsurgency, 'incomplete or partial cultural knowledge' can be just as, if not even more, hazardous (McFate 2005b). McFate's arguments regarding the unique capacity of social scientific expertise to overcome the pitfalls of ethnocentric bias in order to provide complete and accurate socio-cultural knowledge of the populations of Afghanistan and Iraq were profoundly influential in military circles, and ultimately culminated in the development of The Human Terrain System [HTS]. Numerous books and articles have been written which provide comprehensive narrative histories of HTS and detailed analyses of the discourses which led to its formation [see Gonzalez 2008,2009a,2015,2020; McFate & Laurence 2015, Joseph 2014; Forte 2011; Gezari

2013; Gregory 2008; Perugini 2008 as examples]. Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the structure and history of the programme so as to situate the analysis that is to follow.

1.3 The Human Terrain System

Established as a proof of concept in 2005, the HTS was a formal US army programme which set out to provide socio-cultural knowledge capacity through the direct placement of social scientists in the field in Afghanistan and Iraq. The programme would run from 2007 to 2014, and has been described by Roberto Gonzalez as 'the most expensive social science program in history' – costing the US government in excess of $725 million during this period (Gonzalez 2015). As per its mission statement, the central role of the HTS was the conduct of social scientific research about the local populations of Afghanistan and Iraq so as to 'enable culturally astute decision-making, enhance operational effectiveness, and preserve and share socio-cultural institutional knowledge (McFate & Fondacaro 2011:1). The architects of HTS were unperturbed by comparisons to past projects involving the militarised application of social science, and in many cases openly embraced their influence. As noted earlier, McFate was explicit in her view that the revival of anthropology's relationship with the military was a welcome return to its origins as the 'handmaiden of colonialism' which 'evolved as an intellectual tool to consolidate imperial power at the margins of empire' (McFate 2005a). Similarly, rather than eschewing the controversial role of cultural intelligence programmes during the war in Vietnam, advocates for HTS celebrated its relationship to the CORDS/Phoenix project. Jacob Kipp et al, in a 2006 paper supporting the establishment of HTS, went so far as to proudly proclaim the programme as 'a CORDS for the 21st century' (Kipp et al 2006). Whilst initially conceived of as a distinctly anthropological endeavour, in practice the programme would go on to employ and deploy social scientists from a variety of different disciplinary backgrounds including anthropology, political science, social psychology and many more (McFate 2015:77). While McFate envisioned HTS as a vehicle for anthropology's grand re-emergence from its 'Ivory Tower' (McFate 2005a), by 2009 only six of its members held a PhD in anthropology and five more had Master's level degrees in the discipline (CEAUSSIC 2009:13).

The heart of the HTS were its Human Terrain Teams [HTTs] – dedicated social science field research units comprised of mixed military and civilian members embedded at brigade level in Afghanistan and Iraq (McFate & Laurence 2015:37). Initially, HTTs were to comprise a team leader, a research manager, a human terrain analyst and two social scientists (Dorough-Lewis 2015:190-191). In practice however, the composition of HTTs varied considerably, and in response to requirements in the field, guidelines were amended to reflect a suggested team size of five to nine members. At the peak of its power in 2010, over 500 staff were employed by HTS and over 30 different HTTs were active in the field during the programme's existence. In the early stages, all HTS employees were hired via a private subcontractor – British Aerospace Systems [BAE] – as part of a pre-existing omnibus contract with HTS' parent organization the US Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC] intelligence unit (McFate & Laurence 2015:21). As such, all civilians hired by BAE were private contractors, which meant HTS leadership had no direct control over recruitment and no authority to fire personnel for non-performance (McFate & Laurence 2015:21). Eventually all deployed positions would be converted to the status of government employees, but all new recruits would remain as temporary contractors until the end of their training cycle (Laurence 2015: 303). Pre-deployment training was carried out at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and - according to research conducted with former HTT members intended to assess the programme - varied considerably in duration from as a little as several weeks to over five months (Fleuhr-Lobban & Lucas 2015:251). The training provided to HTTs has been the subject of widespread criticism, especially among former employees of the programme (McFate & Laurence 2015:15, CEAUSSIC 2009). Former HTT members have questioned both the relevance and quality of the training received (CEAUSSIC 2009), whilst critics suggest that the rush to fill personnel demands in the field led to even further compromises on training quality and preparedness (Gonzalez 2015). This is supported by testimony contained in the American Anthropological Association's 2009 CEAUSSIC report which concludes:

> The kind of training received by prospective HTT members raises the concern that what is labelled as training in "anthropology" or "ethnographic methods" is not in fact that so much as more akin to an undergraduate-type all-purpose and largely decontextualized introduction to basic or generic social science skills… An anthropologist who was able to observe HTS classes at Ft. Leavenworth observed, "It's generic training. Everything is extremely

> rushed, in part because they are trying to ramp it up so fast" (CEAUSSIC 2009:20).

Pre-deployment training also involved military and weapons training (Gonzalez 2020:230). Social scientists serving on HTTs were given the option of being armed when in the field, and many took up this option to carry weapons while conducting research (Callaghan 2015:106). Some of the implications of conducting social scientific research at the barrel of a gun will be explored later in this thesis.

While HTTs were deployed to provide cultural knowledge at brigade level, McFate and Laurence suggest that there was considerable pressure upon HTS to provide HTT support at higher levels of the military structure (McFate & Laurence 2015:13). In response to this, Human Terrain Analysis Teams [HTATs] were created in order to 'synchronize research and facilitate integration of social science research and analysis products at division level' (Laurence 2015:295). HTATs conducted their own research, and also collated research from HTTs, with a view to informing decision-making at division level (McFate & Laurence 2015:13). In addition to the HTATs, another type of unit – Theatre Coordination Elements [HTS-TCE] – was created to provide a HTS function at the Corps level. Laurence, an ardent defender of HTS, claims that the addition of the HTAT and HTS-TCE were a demand driven consequence of the programme's success, and were not representative of an internal drive to extend its influence. She contends:

> None of this expansion represented empire building. Rather, the additional elements were either requests from brigade, division and corps level or proved necessary to run the program (Laurence 2015:295).

In addition to its teams embedded at these various levels of the military structure, HTS also comprised of an underlying support infrastructure intended to provide domestic based secondary research support. Two Research Reachback Centres [RRCs] were built in America – each focused on one specific theatre of operation. The RRCs were intended to 'provide a link to a central research facility in the United States that draws on the government and academic sources to answer any cultural or ethnographic questions the commander or his staff might have' (Kipp et al 2006:13). The intention was for RRCs

to be staffed by civilian experts and analysts to conduct ‘secondary source research on demand’ in response to specific requests submitted by researchers in the field. However, once again the extent to which this worked in practice is unclear. In relation to the RRCs, Roberto Gonzalez observes:

> These were designed to link HTTs with specialists who could provide databases of cultural information to assist with counterinsurgency operations, but the effort was plagued with technical problems. The specialists were also notorious for recycling anecdotal information mined from Wikipedia and blogs, mixed with indiscriminate samplings of peer-reviewed literature. ‘Reachback capability’ was in a sense HTS’s unrealised high-tech dream. (Gonzalez 2020:236).

Other ambiguous research support initiatives are referred to in HTS literature, such as Social Science Research and Analysis [SSRA] support and the Subject Matter Expert Network [SMEn], but there is little detail available regarding their specific structures or functions. A Program Development Team [PDT] was established in 2006 with a view to conducting assessments and guiding development of the programme based upon feedback from those in the field (McFate & Laurence 2015:16). At least one yearly report was produced by the team in 2007/2008 (Laurence 2015:292), and the team participated in at least two assessments of deployed HTTs (Reedy 2015:177), but there is no further mention of the PDT after 2009. Finally, HTS developed a dedicated toolkit intended to provide database management for the program – Mapping Human Terrain [MAP-HT]. Kipp et al describe MAP-HT as ‘an automated database and presentation tool that allows teams to gather, store, manipulate, and provide cultural data from hundreds of categories (Kip et al 2006). They go on to provide an ambitious description of how the software is intended to function as a centralised database for the programme:

> Data will cover such subjects as key regional personalities, social structures, links between clans and families, economic issues, public communications, agricultural production, and the like. The data compiled and archived will be transferred to follow-on units. Moreover, although MAP-HT will be operated by the HTTs, the system will regularly transfer data to rear elements for storage in a larger archive, to allow for more advanced analysis and wider use by the military and other government agencies (Kipp et al. 2006:13)

However, while it appears that MAP-HT was used in some capacity by HTS, its use seems to have been sporadic, and it is clear that it never functioned as a centralised tool in the manner in which it was envisaged. Former HTT members frequently bemoaned the lack of a centralised database and the failure of the programme to facilitate the effective retention and dissemination of research findings. Former HTT member Brian Brereton has captures this when he comments:

> Another operational constraint hindering socio-cultural research efforts in Afghanistan was the inconsistent and often incompatible technological capabilities. HTT research managers – tasked with collecting, storing and distributing research notes and finished products – were constantly distracted by unsuccessful and inconsistent database systems where submissions standards and formatting conventions changed weekly. The research managers were asked to upload notes and products to multiple databases – CIDNE, TIGR, MAP -HT, and the HTT's Research Reachback Centre -each with their own submission rules. Although technologically advanced programs are designed to ensure institutional memory as US military units rotate into and out of an area, this lack of standardization means that information is often difficult, to locate or utilize (Brereton 2015:281).

It appears a common theme that the structures of HTS differed greatly in the real world to the images in the mind of its architects.

1.4 The Fall of HTS and the Genesis of this Research.

In contrast to the fanfare and whirlwind of publicity which marked its birth, HTS was slowly wound down without even a formal announcement to mark its ending. Roberto Gonzalez recalls hearing rumours of the programme's demise throughout 2014, and during this period HTS had disappeared from news reports and its website simply stopped updating (Gonzalez 2015). Upon contacting TRADOC to enquire as to the status of the programme, Gonzalez received a short email reply from Major Harold Huff confirming that HTS had indeed been officially terminated on September 30th 2014 (Gonzalez 2015). Gonzalez cites a number of different factors which contributed to this

drastic decline. With the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, and the scheduled conclusion of the programme's role in Afghanistan in 2014, HTS found itself surplus to requirements and unable to find a new home within the military willing to continue its funding (Gonzalez 2020:233). The fall from grace of its chief military supporter General David Petraeus, and the waning enthusiasm for counterinsurgency within military circles also contributed to the programme's decline (Gonzalez 2020,2015). Within Pentagon circles, there was a pronounced shift away from cultural intelligence towards the 'rapidly growing fields of computational social science and predictive modelling' and the embrace of the role of algorithms and big data in the warfighting of the future (Gonzalez 2020:234). Finally, Gonzalez observes how in 2013 a number of investigative journalists including Tom Vanden Brook, Vanessa Gezari and John Stanton took up opposition to the project – each independently pursuing and publishing a series of negative stories focusing on some of the more controversial and insidious aspects of HTS (Gonzalez 2020:2015). The programme was surrounded by scandal and controversy from the time of its establishment. As early as 2009, there were reports of rampant sexual harassment within HTS, along with allegations of racism and 'payroll padding' (Gonzalez 2020:232; Vanden Brook 2013). There were also allegations of mismanagement and bad administration (McFate and Laurence 2015:249), and journalist John Stanton quotes an Army insider who described the programme as 'the clearest example of fraud, waste and abuse I have seen' (Stanton 2008). There was also widespread concern, including from HTS management, of a lack of professional qualifications among many the social scientists in the field (McFate & Laurence 2015:21). In particular, the recruitment strategies and hiring practices of BAE came in for criticism, with suggestions that it lacked the 'know how to locate, recruit or select social scientists with the requisite skills' (Laurence 2015:300). In a piece in which she describes the lessons learned from HTS, Janice Laurence comments:

> In addition to recruiting, the selection and management of personnel was inadequate, deficient, arbitrary and capricious. While bone fide occupation qualifications, position descriptions, performance objectives, and performance management required a comprehensive job analysis, which was outside BAE's purview, one would nevertheless have expected some technical expertise on behalf of the contractor (Laurence 2015:300).

The deaths of three civilian contractors also generated negative attention for the programme. In particular, the circumstances surrounding the death of anthropologist Paula Loyd in Afghanistan in 2009 led to widespread outrage. Upon hearing of Loyd's death, a former Army ranger and member of Loyd's HTT carried out the extra-judicial murder of the man responsible with an execution style gunshot to the head. The contractor, Don Ayala, later pled guilty to voluntary manslaughter in the US, but escaped jail receiving a punishment of probation and a $12,500 fine (Callaghan 2015:345).

In the years since its inception, HTS has been the subject of much research and critical analysis – most of which has been driven by the American anthropological community itself. From the outset, American anthropologists were at the forefront of opposition to the programme. This resulted in the establishment of the American Anthropological Association's [AAA] Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the U.S. Security and Intelligence Communities [CEAUSSIC], tasked with investigating HTS in light of the concerns around its militarised application of anthropology. CEAUSSIC's final report – published in 2009 – condemned HTS and concluded:

> When ethnographic investigation is determined by military missions, not subject to external review, where data collection occurs in the context of war, integrated into the goals of counterinsurgency, and in a potentially coercive environment – all characteristic factors of the HTS concept and its application – it can no longer be considered a legitimate professional exercise of anthropology (CEAUSSIC 2009:3).

In his 2011 review essay 'The Human Terrain System and Anthropology: A Review of Ongoing Public Debates', American anthropologist Maximillian Forte provides an instructive summary of the public debates and critical interventions emerging from the American anthropological community. Roberto Gonzalez has undoubtedly been the most prolific exponent of critical research on the programme and has combined narrative accounts with searing ethical, theoretical and practical critiques of HTS [see Gonzalez 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2015 and 2020 for just a few select examples]. Gonzalez' frequent collaborator, anthropologist David Price, is another prominent contributor to critical research on HTS, including a 2011 book 'Weaponizing Anthropology' (Price 2011), and his numerous critical articles published in online magazine Counterpunch [see Price 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010b; Gonzalez & Price 2007,

2015a, 2015b for examples]. Some more theoretically focused critical interventions include work by Markus Kienscherf who considers the neo-orientalist logic of HTS and counterinsurgency (Kienscherf 2010), and also explores the biopolitical consequences of cultural knowledge as the production of 'safe' and 'dangerous' human lives (Kienscherf 2011). Brian Foster has expounded upon the relation between HTS and the past deployment of anthropological knowledge through the US organization 'the Inquiry' during World War 1, and in doing so situates HTS within the wider historical narrative explaining how the ethnographic culture concept came to dominate conventional understandings of culture (Foster 2014). And finally, Maja Zehfuss explores the limitations of critiques of HTS offered by anthropologists, and suggests that they failed to 'tackle the problem of ethics deployed as a supposedly extra-political standard that can serve to (de)legitimize political projects' (Zehfuss 2012).

The above list of critical research carried produced around HTS is by no means exhaustive, and the sheer volume of critical material precludes any truly comprehensive exploration here. But despite the abundance of research on the various facets of HTS, there are two categories of material that have largely escaped any form of critical interrogation. Firstly, there has been little theoretical or critical scrutiny of the substantive content of research produced by HTTs in the field and the research associated with HTS that is available in the public domain. These materials include HTT members' descriptions of their own research during their time with the project, including a special edition of Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin journal published in 2011, academic journal articles published after the fact based upon work during their time with HTS, and unclassified reports, white papers and research documents produced by Research Reachback Centres which have found their way into the public domain. Secondly, there has been little critical engagement with the published self-reflections of former HTT members on their time in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan. The most significant source of these reflections is the edited collection 'Social Science Goes to War: The Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan' compiled by Montgomery McFate and Janice H. Laurence. According to its editors, the book sets out to:

> Fill a gap: namely, the actual lived experience of social scientists who served on HTTs in Iraq and Afghanistan (McFate and Laurence 2015:40).

Through critical engagement with the publicly available research produced by HTS and with the personal lived experience as recounted in the reflections of former members on their time with the project, this research will make a much-needed contribution to the existing critical literature on the project. With this in mind, the central research objective of this study is as follows: to explore the deployment of culture as technology of intervention through a critical analysis of the research output of the Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan, and of the lived experiences of former participants as detailed in their own self-reflections on their time in the field. In particular, the research sets out to explore how various iterations of the culture concept functioned differentially within these discourses. Relatedly, the study will examine the extent to which these discourses are predicated upon, and serve to reproduce, a crude binary between an enlightened, progressive and civilised 'West' and a communal, primitive and culture-bound native 'Other'. In doing so the research will explore the widespread application of the concept of 'tribe' in these discourses, and examine the divergent representations of tribe applied by HTTs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, through the examination of the reflections of HTS members, and an exploration of their self-conceptualisation of their participation in the project, this thesis will shed light on vital theoretical issues pertaining to the role of the Western expert in the prosecution of military intervention. To achieve these aims and objectives, this thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 will outline the methodology adopted by the study, and provide an iterative description of the research process. Next, chapter 3 will examine the trajectory of the concept of culture within the discipline of anthropology. This will provide an outline of old and new anthropological approaches to culture which will inform the analysis to follow, and examine some critical analyses of the approaches to culture during the early stages of the wars. In chapter 4 I will critically interrogate the reflections of former HTT members on their time in the field. This will examine their self-conceptualisations of their participation in the programme, their views on the particular value of social scientific knowledge and their representations of the relationship between the researchers and their subjects. Chapter 5 examines the deployment of the concept of tribe in the discourses in the HTS research on Iraq. This will explore research making the argument for the incorporation of tribal dispute resolution mechanisms and traditional tribal governance mechanisms as a solution to sectarian violence, before outlining the general picture of Iraqi tribal structure that emerges from this research. In Chapter 6 I expand the scope to interrogate HTS research from Afghanistan, and look at the departure from the concept of tribe in these discourses. This will demonstrate how HTS researchers abandoned the tribe concept in favour of other generalised schemas for understanding Afghan society - such as neopatrimonialism and village-ism – and explore the significance of this shift to our

understanding of the instrumentalization of culture by HTS. Finally, the thesis will conclude with a summary of these findings, and theorize their significance to the overall objectives of the study.

2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This section will outline the methods and methodology adopted by this study and outline the process according to which the research was conducted. In order to accomplish this the chapter will proceed as follows; firstly, it will examine the concept of prior instrumentation and explore the point of departure from which the research began. This section will also briefly describe the master's research which preceded this study and establish its relation to the current project. The next section will outline the process behind the selection of an appropriate methodological approach to the study. This will describe how the exploratory nature of the research led me to structure the project as a thematic documentary analysis informed by elements of grounded theory. The section will also explore the key features of the 'theoretical sampling' approach borrowed from grounded theory methodology, and explain the rationale for avoiding the adoption of a formal grounded theory framework for the research. The following section will provide an iterative account of the research process with a focus upon data collection and analysis. In particular this will demonstrate the practical application of the key tenets of theoretical sampling including a cyclical approach to data identification, collection and analysis, the practical manner in which research direction was driven by theoretical imperatives, the open-ended approach to establishing a data set, and the pursuit of deviant cases as a means of providing analytical rigour. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief examination of the approach to documents and the mode of textual analysis adopted by the study.

2.2 Prior Instrumentation

Miles and Huberman (1994) deploy the term 'prior instrumentation' to refer to the extent to which researchers deploy pre-defined methods, measures, assumptions, and hypotheses to inform the shape and direction of a study. While some studies make extensive use of such prior instrumentation, there is a possibility that such an approach may serve to limit the potential of the research and conceal unsuspected phenomena which it otherwise may discover (Silverman 2013:123.) Citing Miles and Huberman, Silverman suggests that all that is really needed as a point of departure for research are

‘some orientating questions, some headings for observations [and] a rough and ready document analysis form’ (Silverman 2013:123.) At its outset, this project began as a loosely structured, exploratory study with a very limited set of prior instrumentation derived from my research at master’s level. This included a general theoretical location and epistemological orientation within a tradition of postcolonialism, poststructuralism and Foucauldian analysis, a series of hypothesis derived from my master’s thesis, and a generalised interest in the deployment of academics and social scientists in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq.

It is necessary to briefly discuss my master’s research so as to establish the starting point for the present study. The research focused upon the work of American anthropologist Montgomery McFate – the most vocal academic proponent and primary intellectual architect of the Human Terrain System, and a key figure driving the cultural turn in US military strategy in Iraq. It took as its data all McFate’s published articles across a roughly eight-year period in which she set out her arguments for the creation of HTS and its role in the collection and refinement of ‘accurate’ socio-cultural knowledge in the prosecution of counterinsurgency. My analysis drew three broad conclusions regarding the positioning of communal identities within McFate’s discourses on Iraq. Firstly, I examined the invocation of notions of ‘tribe’ in her analysis of Iraqi identity and social organisation, and found that the deployment of the ‘tribe’ concept in these discourses is predicated upon, and served to reproduce, a crude, reductionist and essentialist representation of the people of Iraq, which is consistent with the cultural racisms and Orientalism that underwrite the wider project of the ‘War on Terror.’ The invocation of the tribe concept was also demonstrative of the extent to which McFate’s analyses were rooted in a distinctly ‘old anthropological’ understanding of culture. Secondly, I identified the propensity of these discourses to conceive of the ‘tribal native’ as fundamentally ahistorical – existing in a perpetual state of primitivism outside of time and immune to progress and the forces of modernisation. The third dimension of my analysis explored how McFate’s differential representation of Enlightened Western warfare, and culturally determined insurgent violence served to reproduce a crude binary dichotomy between the culture-free, rational West and an irrational, cultural and violent Other. (Dunne 2013) I concluded that McFate’s discourses are predicated upon a theory of nativism which bears remarkable similarity to the academic discourses that informed British colonial practices and policy in the mid to late 19th century. This conceptual overlap between discourses of intervention separated by vast spatial and temporal distance was intriguing, but also problematic. What appeared clear is that primitivist representations of local populations and the administrative category of the ‘native’ have long been

present in the discursive formations that underwrite, inform and determine the prosecution of Western intervention throughout the globe.

This project emerged as a direct continuation of this work. There was no single clearly defined research question, and although I was aware of an abundance of potential data sets, there remained some uncertainty around the availability of data and the exact direction which the study would take. In light of its theoretical location, and the findings of my earlier research detailed above, there were a number of general objectives I sought accomplish with the research. Firstly, I wanted to continue to expand my investigation into the way academic representations of primitivistic 'native' identities functioned as technologies of Western intervention. Secondly, I wanted to expand the scope of my earlier research to examine the extent to which the conclusions reached through my theorisation of the work of Montgomery McFate could be applied to wider discourses of the cultural turn in US military policy. I was particularly interested in exploring the pervasiveness of tribe as a unit of analysis in Iraq, and the seemingly unproblematic adoption of old anthropological ideas of culture. Finally, I wanted to engage in a comprehensive, granular, and theoretical analysis of discourses of the cultural turn. While there has been an abundance of critical engagement with HTS, and the cultural turn more broadly, much of this work has centred around ethical concerns regarding the relationship between the academy and the military, organisational and governance failings of HTS, the difficulties of conducting research in a war zone and other practical issues. A primary goal of this project was to remedy, what I perceived to be, a dearth of substantive theoretical engagement with the concepts and ideas advanced in the discourses of the cultural turn. While Derek Gregory (2008), David Price (2011), Roberto Gonzalez (2009a) Oliver Belcher (2013) and others have made valuable contributions in this regard, there remained a significant volume of academic and military discourse which appeared to have avoided rigorous, theoretical scrutiny.

2.3 Methodology and Research Design.

From the starting point outlined above, I was faced with the task of identifying a methodological approach and overall research design which would be appropriate to the requirements of the project. This decision was informed by a number of different criteria;

firstly, the chosen approach needed to be fundamentally exploratory in nature. With minimal 'prior instrumentation' outside of my pre-existing findings and some loose theoretical propositions, the design needed to afford considerable flexibility in terms of the direction of the study, and the ongoing iterative development of research questions, aims and objectives. Furthermore, the lack of a clearly defined data set at the outset required the incorporation of a process and mechanism through which such a data set would ultimately be identified and selected. I was clear in my desire to expand the scope of my master's research beyond the work of Montgomery McFate to incorporate wider discourses of the 'cultural turn,' and I was eager that this would involve documents which were the direct product of academic research. I was aware that a substantial volume of material fit these criteria, and as such, an appropriate approach to sampling and case selection would be required to narrow the scope of the research. Despite this apparent abundance of data, there was also some uncertainty regarding the availability of data which would be practically useful and relevant to the theoretical issues, themes, and concepts that I wished to explore. Indeed, during the early phases of data collection much of the material I examined proved fruitless in this regard. In addition to this need for a suitably exploratory methodology, I was also cognisant that any chosen approach must fit with my own particular epistemological and theoretical situation. This work occupies a space within a tradition of post-colonial and poststructuralist scholarship, and as such, required the adoption of methods of investigation which were consistent with this orientation. Finally, whilst conscious of the need for flexibility, I was also eager to ensure that any design would also facilitate a high level of methodological rigour and quality of research.

In light of the above, this study has been structured as a thematic documentary analysis informed by elements of grounded theory. The reasoning for eschewing a formalised grounded theory methodology will be discussed shortly, but first it is necessary to outline the ways in which this research has deployed research techniques directly derived from grounded theory approaches. These include the adoption of theoretical/purposive sampling, an inductive approach to theorisation and concept generation, cyclical, episodic data collection and analysis and the active search for deviant cases. Theoretical sampling, often considered interchangeably with purposive sampling, refers to a process of data selection driven by the theoretical imperatives of the research at hand. As described by Jennifer Mason:

> Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position … and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample … which is meaningful theoretically (Mason 1996:93-94 in Silverman 2013:151.)

Within this frame, sampling choices are actively informed by the extent to which potential data sets can serve to advance the concepts or theoretical phenomena which are under investigation. This approach was particularly appropriate given the large volume of potential data available and the uncertainty regarding the extent to which much of this material would be conceptually and theoretically relevant to the research at hand. During the early stages of my data sourcing and identification I was preoccupied with issues related to representativeness based upon understandings informed by quantitative and statistical conceptions of sampling. I feared that in my pursuit of data relevant to my theoretical interests I would fall into the trap of cherry-picking, and struggled with the need to balance a focus upon relevant data, with this perceived need for representativeness. However, the adoption of the principles of theoretical sampling provided a solution to this problem. Silverman comments that for qualitative research 'the secret seems to be to substitute theoretical cogency for the statistical language of quantitative research' (Silverman 2013:156.) Robert Yin expands upon this in his discussion of the process of selecting qualitative case studies. He argues:

> case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and, in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin 2009:15 in Silverman 2013:146).

Silverman takes this point a step further and draws upon Giampietro Gobo to describe how even deploying the term 'case' risks the misapplication of quantitative understandings to qualitative research, and suggests that qualitative research is really concerned with 'instances' as opposed to 'cases' (Silverman 2013:156). Either way, the technique of theoretical sampling has provided me with an approach to sampling which prioritises the conceptual relevance and utility of prospective data and sets aside

quantitative concerns regarding the extent to which these data may be representative of a wider population. Three key dimensions of theoretical sampling derived from a grounded theory approach are deployed in this research: cyclical, episodic phases of data collection and analysis, the pursuit of deviant cases, and an openness to the incorporation of new cases (or instances).

Clive Seale suggests that 'a commitment to the continual re-examination of data in the light of developing arguments is the principal feature of grounded theorising' (Seale 2012:395.) As such, grounded theory studies cycle 'between episodes of data collection and data analysis, the one informing the other, so that the eventual research report is very likely to exhibit good concept-indicator links' (Seale 2012:393.) In their original explication of the grounded theory method, Glaser and Strauss succinctly describe this process when they comment:

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his[sic] data and decides what data and where to find them, in order to develop his[sic] theory as it emerges. The process of data collection is controlled by the emergent theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967:45)

Whilst not applying a formal grounded theory methodology, this study has deployed a cyclical, episodic approach to analysis and collection which is heavily informed by theoretical sampling. Data selection was driven by theoretical imperatives and themes which, in turn, developed and changed inductively in the process of analysis. As new hypotheses emerged, and existing theories evolved, this further determined the direction of new data collection. At later stages of the project, when the data set was largely complete, the cyclical process continued to inform sampling by enabling me to determine which documents within the data set were most valuable, and which were of lesser importance. Another key instrument adopted from the practice of theoretical sampling and grounded theory more broadly was the active pursuit of negative instances or deviant cases. Seale describes how the concept of theoretical sampling incorporates and modifies:

> the principle (which at the time was well established by Becker (1970) and others) of searching for negative instances…Such sampling involves choosing cases to study, people to interview, settings to observe, with a view to finding things that might challenge the limitations of the existing theory, forcing the researcher to change it in order to incorporate new phenomena (Seale 2012: 395).

Silverman speaks directly to this idea when it comes to the selection of cases in qualitative research. Citing Mason, he argues 'that you must overcome any tendency to select a case which is likely to support your argument. Instead, it makes sense to seek out negative instances as defined by the theory with which you are working (Silverman 2013:152.) I was particularly aware of the dangers of confirmation bias when selecting data on the basis of its theoretical and conceptual relevance, thus I made the pursuit of negative instances a key component of research design. In the coming sections I will demonstrate how this principle practically informed the research, and ultimately led to a significant refinement of scope beyond the case of Iraq to incorporate material which directly contradicted the central hypotheses. This also speaks to the final dimension of the theoretical sampling approach which was relevant to the research at hand – the changing of sample size and flexibility to choose new cases during the course of the study. In contrast to most quantitative studies which operate with a fixed data set, theoretical sampling allows for and demands the continuous pursuit of new data and samples. This theoretically informed flexibility was vital given the previously mentioned dearth of prior instrumentation and uncertainty surrounding the availability of pertinent data. In keeping with this approach, the data set was never fully finalised. Naturally, the early stages of the project involved the casting of a wide net and a comprehensive search for new data, whilst the latter stages of the project saw significantly less new data collection. Following from the typology outlined by Zina O'Leary, the process of searching for data applied a phased approach progressing from explorative searching to methodological searching and on to more explicit searching as I moved through cycles of collection and analysis (O'Leary 2017:103.) Finally, when the structure of the thesis began to clearly emerge, and a relatively fixed data set had been established, the search for new data was reduced to monitoring activity, which involved ongoing passive monitoring for new data relevant to the study.

Before moving on to an iterative exploration of the practical dimensions of the research process, it is necessary to briefly explain why I have chosen to borrow the principles of theoretical sampling as opposed to adopting a formalised grounded theory methodology. This decision was based on two factors: the association of grounded theory with positivism/modernism, and my aversion to the formalised coding processes of grounded theory approaches. Despite more contemporary attempts to re-imagine and develop constructivist, poststructuralist and postmodernist understandings of grounded theory (see Clark 2003), I am in broad agreement with critics such as Denzin who characterise formal grounded theory as reliant upon a fundamentally modernist and positivist epistemological orientation. Clive Seale notes that Denzin's central critique of grounded theory is rooted:

> in the view that the modernist assumption of an empirical world that can be studied objectively by qualitative methodology is no longer sustainable. He makes the apparent democratic point that the scientific emphasis on theories generated by researchers gets in the way of paying close attention to the theories people use in everyday life (Seale 2012:400).

For Denzin, grounded theory was typical of the attempts of positivistic social science to imbue qualitative research with an objective, scientific rigour. He cautions:

> By making qualitative research "scientifically" respectable, researchers may be imposing schemes of interpretation on the social world that simply do not fit that world as it is constructed and lived by interacting individuals (Denzin 1988:432 in Seale 2011:400).

The notion of research as the objective, scientific discovery of social truths is fundamentally incompatible with the epistemological and theoretical location of this study, and as such, the deployment of formal grounded theory was not appropriate for the task at hand. Another relevant critique of formal grounded theory relates to its overreliance upon highly structured and regimented coding processes (Seale 2012:401). I have deliberately avoided the adoption of any of the rigidly defined coding processes associated with formal grounded theory in favour of a looser more open-ended and flexible approach to coding and category generation. The following iterative discussion

will explain how my personal approach to coding was practically incorporated into the process of theoretical sampling, and demonstrate the way in which this coding informed the direction and structure of the research project.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

As has been previously discussed, the starting point for this research involved broad, generalised aims coupled with minimal prior instrumentation. The intention was to pursue a number of broad themes and theories regarding the cultural turn in US military strategy in Iraq, and more specifically, expand the scope of my masters' research beyond the work of Montgomery McFate to examine wider discourses of the cultural turn. In these early stages I was dealing with an abundance of potential data, and I adopted an approach which was in line with what O'Leary would term 'explorative searching' (2017:103). At this point I was open to the exploration of any and all literature related to the cultural turn; while I was primarily interested in academic texts and research output, I was also open to the inclusion of a variety of military material including doctrine, handbooks and field guides. I considered the possibility of incorporating interviews into the research design, primarily with a view to enhancing the potential to measure effect of the discourses and practices under consideration, however ultimately, I decided to limit the scope of the research to naturally occurring data. It was immediately clear that there was an abundance of potentially salient material around which little critical work had been undertaken; the identification of a sufficient volume of data was not going to be an issue. My main concern related to limiting the scope in such a way as would make theoretical and practical sense, and would maximise the value and potential impact of the research project.

I established a three-pronged approach to the early exploratory phase of data identification. In the first instance, I employed standard key word searches using Google Scholar, Academia.edu, library resources and various other search engines. This proved extremely useful in identifying a wide variety of potential data. Secondly, I utilised a more targeted approach centred upon specific American academic and professional journals within the field of military and security studies. These publications included Joint-Forces

Quarterly [JFQ], Military Review, Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin [MIPB] and Small Wars Journal. This was supplemented with the targeting of research output from US military educational institutions including the US Army War College, the National Defence University and the US Naval War College. Within this exploratory strand, a number of different resources were especially promising, including several MIPB special editions on the subject of cultural awareness, and a reading list of resources related to cultural awareness compiled by the library of the US Army War College. Finally, the third dimension of exploratory data sourcing is what I will refer to broadly as 'bibliographic searching'. This involved a process of snowballing which used references and citations from existing critical work, and sources of potential data, as leads for use in identifying potential data sources. Further to this method, existing bibliographic resources also proved useful. In particular, Maximilian Forte's extensive online bibliography and archive compiled links to over 500 articles and web pages pertaining to the relationship between anthropology and the US military and security apparatus. Much of this material was focused upon the Human Terrain System and issues relating to counterinsurgency strategy, and while some of this material involved secondary critical work, much of it was precisely the type of literature I was interested in analysing. Additionally, the bibliography was available complete with brief summaries and annotation of each document, web page or article, which made the process of identifying prospective data significantly more practicable. Through these three processes a large selection of potential data was identified and sorted, and the primary goal of the initial stages of analysis was to refine a coherent, and manageable data set for the project.

In line with the grounded theory style approach, the data collection and analysis process was divided into a number of distinct cycles or phases. This early exploratory process was labelled 'Phase 1', and was concerned with performing a superficial examination of as much potential data as possible with a view to narrowing the scope of the project for its subsequent phases. As mentioned previously, this early collection and analysis involved any potentially salient material which was related to the cultural turn in Iraq. Collection and analysis took place simultaneously during this phase, and involved quick reads of each document, assigning a weighting according to potential theoretical or thematic relevance, tagging according to topic and the composition of a brief summary which varied in length depending on potential relevance. At this point a distinct and identifiable body of work emerged as a potential coherent data set for the project. The work comprised of an influential body of work situated within the cultural turn which David Ucko referred to as 'the new counterinsurgency era' (Ucko 2009). Following this. a period of time was spent putting together an overall picture of the key figures associated with

these discourses and assembling as many relevant texts as possible. However, as I continued the process of analysis, tagging, and summary it soon became apparent that this body of work would not be a suitable data set for the purposes of my research. Even though the project began with limited prior instrumentation, there was a clear theoretical interest in the role of the concept of culture in the cultural turn, the recurrent application of a tribal lens to the description of Iraqi society, and the role of primitive representations of identity as a technology of intervention in Iraq. As my analysis of the texts of 'the new counterinsurgency era' progressed, I was finding less and less theoretically salient material, and this was reflected in the summary, tagging and weighting of each article. As I discovered, this body of work was heavily influenced by the fields of political science, war studies, and military history, and as such, contained little focus on concepts such as culture, tribe and identity which were frequently deployed by other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. Furthermore, upon reviewing my initial documentary analysis, a clear pattern emerged whereby the most salient theoretical material, and documents which were tagged and weighted as most relevant, were all specifically related to HTS in Iraq. The move away from the material of 'the new counterinsurgency era' and the narrowing of the focus upon material related to HTS in Iraq is the first practical example of the manner in which data collection and sampling, and indeed the wider trajectory of the research project, was informed by the conceptual relevance and theoretical utility of the material encountered during the research cycle.

The next identifiable cycle of data collection and analysis can be referred to as 'Phase 2' of the project. Having narrowed the scope of the research to material related specifically to HTS in Iraq, I separated all the relevant potential data identified during phase 1, along with the analysis of these data from that phase, and discarded all other superfluous material. At this point all material was listed on a centralised excel document created as an archive sheet for the purposes of data management. The sheet contained columns detailing the title, author, year published, number of pages, type (book section, journal article etc), and also a column listing the themes and tags I had attached to the text. Furthermore, a custom colour coded legend was created in order to indicate the level of analysis conducted upon each text – blue indicating a superficial quick read and summary, yellow indicating a full annotation, and orange indicating full coding (relevant later when it comes to structuring and writing the thesis). At this point three clear categories of data emerged – research derived from HTS work in the field, reports from HTTs and RRCs which had made it into the public domain, and HTS doctrine and handbook documents. Each category of document was listed on a separate dedicated

sheet within the excel document. Further data collection at this point was clearly informed by the narrowing of scope to focus on the further collection of material related to HTS in Iraq which fell into these three categories. The analysis dimension of Phase 2 involved revisiting relevant documents from Phase 1 and completing a full annotation, revised summary, and tagging. Once again this involved weighting the data according to potential relevance. The same process was undertaken with new documents collected during this phase. Perhaps the most significant event which took place during Phase 2 involved another major refinement in the scope of the research. In the process of searching for new data, I encountered significant volumes of highly thematically relevant material relating to the activity of HTS in Afghanistan. The initial decision to focus exclusively on Iraq was largely an arbitrary consequence of my earlier master's research, and the assumption that an examination of discourses pertaining to both Iraq and Afghanistan would be beyond the scope of a PhD project. However, given the volume of material involved at this point I was confident that expanding the scope to include material related to Afghanistan was indeed possible. Perhaps more importantly, initial superficial reading of material related to HTS in Afghanistan indicated that there was significant methodological value to be gained from its inclusion. The expansion of the project to include material related to HTS in Afghanistan served two distinct functions. Firstly, in line with one of the central principals of theoretical sampling which requires an openness to the inclusion of new cases or instances, the methodological approach necessitated the inclusion of new theoretically salient data when encountered. Secondly, the incorporation of material related to Afghanistan evidences a degree of analytical and methodological rigour insofar as it can be understood as an example of the process of deviant case analysis. Initial readings of material related to the deployment of the concept of tribe in Afghanistan indicated a marked departure from the use of the tribe concept in the case of Iraq. Furthermore, apparently more sophisticated elaborations of the culture concept appeared present in this material which complicated my hypothesis that HTS was purely reliant upon a distinctly 'old anthropological' ethnographic culture concept. The inclusion of these potential challenges to my central hypotheses demonstrate that the research was driven by genuine theoretical enquiry, as opposed to a pursuit of data with a view to confirming previously held assumptions and hypotheses. By the end of Phase 2 of collection and analysis the data set for the project comprised of HTS material related to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Having finalised the scope of the research, the data collection process was largely complete by the early point of the third phase of collection and analysis. From this point onwards data collection and sourcing wound down with the exception of

ongoing monitoring designed to catch any emerging research of interest to the study. During this third phase of research there was a further recalibration of the semantic categories into which the data were grouped that would have significant impact upon the structure of the thesis and composition of the findings chapters. Early in the analysis process it became apparent that my previous data categorisation had become redundant, and the data was redistributed into three new categories – researcher's reflections on their time in the field, tribe in Iraq and tribe in Afghanistan. In the cases where a text fit more than one category it was placed into both on the relevant sheet in the excel archive workbook. By this stage all texts with theoretically relevant material had been fully annotated, and the bulk of this phase of analysis consisted of the final coding process before writing up findings. A major portion of the analytical and theoretical groundwork of the research actually took place during the annotation, and by the time I got to the final coding it was mostly a case of ordering the material according to categories generated during the analysis. The three categories of data – researcher's reflections from the field, tribe in Iraq and tribe in Afghanistan – became the parent categories under which all other related themes and ideas would be coded. These categories, which were naturally generated through the cyclical research process – became the structure upon which the findings chapters of the thesis were framed. The coding process involved revisiting each annotated piece of data – text by text – colour coding according to sub-categories of themes which were each assigned to a relevant parent category. These sub-categories would then go on to form the sub-sections of each chapter. An example of how this process was undertaken in practice can be shown with reference to the 'Researcher Experience' findings chapter to follow.

Parent category > Researcher Experience

^

Sub-categories > The Veracity of Social Scientific Knowledge, Etic/Emic Distinctions, The Voices of the Voiceless, Informed Consent, Operational Relevance, Operational Knowledge, Orientalist Adventurers, Leaving the Ivory Tower

All material from each annotated text was coded according to its relevance to particular sub-categories. This material was then transferred from the annotation documents to a central document for each parent category. This central coded document was then used as a framework for the writing of each findings chapter. The selection of data and the process of analysis and theory generation was guided throughout all three phases by the principals of theoretical sampling. This process, combined with my personalised approach to data management and data coding enabled this project to progress from a

vague outline guided by minimal prior instrumentation to a completed research project which critically analyses an important but previously neglected data set.

2.5 Approach to Documents and Textual Analysis

To conclude this methodology chapter, it is necessary to offer some brief notes regarding the approach to documents implicit in this research project, and the mode of textual analysis it deploys. In 2008, sociologist Lindsay Prior put forward a powerful case for the repositioning of documents in social research (Prior 2008). Prior contended that traditionally dominant approaches within social research have 'tended to view documents primarily as sources of evidence and as receptacles of inert content' (Prior 2008:821). This primarily positions documents as 'containers for words, images, information, instructions and so forth' which 'should be brought into the research frame solely as "informants"' (Prior 2008:822). Prior contests this limited and singular understanding of the role of documents in research, and comments:

> In most forms of social research documents tend to enter and to leave the 'field' in relative silence. Indeed, their place in empirical research is more often than not linked to the use of 'unobtrusive' techniques. Yet it is quite clear that documents are ordinarily positioned to fulfil a dual role; for they appear as both receptacles of content, and as active agents in networks of action. Unfortunately, in the history of sociology only one of the two roles has been regularly highlighted (Prior 2008:822).

This proposes a conceptualisation of documents as actors embedded in networks of action which function as 'active agents in episodes of interaction and schemes of social organisation' (Prior 2008:824). In illustrating his point, Prior devises a typology of four distinct approaches to the use of documents in social research. The first two approaches involve the deployment of document in terms of their content, while the second two approaches are representative of Prior's argument for the repositioning of documents in terms of their use and function. The four approaches are directly described by Prior as follows:

1. Approaches that focus almost entirely on what is ‘in’ the document.
2. ‘Archaeological’ approaches that focus on how document content comes into being.
3. Approaches that focus on how documents are used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends.
4. Approaches that focus on how documents function in, and impact on, schemes of social interaction and social organization (Prior 2008:825).

This typology provides a useful lens through which to situate the approach to documents implicit in the research, whilst also acknowledging some of the weaknesses and limitations which arise from the nature of the data and the study itself.

Somewhat unavoidably, this research invariably involves a focus upon the content of the documents which make up its data. The primary activity of the study is the critical interrogation of HTS research output with a view to establishing meaning and formulating a theoretical analysis of the content of the research. This focus upon content is unapologetic and deliberate insofar as this content has largely evaded critical analysis, and this is precisely the space this project intends to occupy in the field. As a result, the approach to documents largely reflects approach 1 outlined above, with some elements of the archaeological activity of approach 2. However, this focus does not imply a failure to recognize the need for social research to consider these documents in terms of their form and function. Given the theoretical location of the project in Foucauldian and post-colonial tradition, the notion that the texts under examination are ‘used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends’ and ‘function in, and impact on, schemes of social interaction and social organization’ is absolutely implicit. This research is predicated upon the assumption, derived from a long tradition of critical post-colonial scholarship, that the research produced by HTS is instrumentalised knowledge produced with a view to the realisation of particular ends – in this case the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and the achievement of US military objectives. In this context, it would be impossible to conduct this research without an understanding of documents which emphasises their use and function. However, while I endeavour to situate and understand the documents in this study in relation to their material effect, it is necessary to acknowledge the very real limitations in this regard. A significant weakness of this research lies in the inability – in many cases – to accurately assess the material impact and influence of the discourses which are under scrutiny. This partially arises due to the nature of the data; much of the research in question is theoretically orientated, and advocates for particular military approaches based on specific understandings of the cultures of Iraq and

Afghanistan, but rarely explores the extent to which these ideas translated to specific policy or action. In other ways this weakness can be consider as a problem of access owing to the nature of the military structure. While all of this research has made its way into the public domain, access to information regarding the specificity of military decision-making and operational planning on the ground remains limited. The ability to measure effect and understand the influence of the ideas under consideration has been far more limited than I would have hoped, but despite that, the approach to documents taken in this project acknowledges their importance both in terms of content, and as active agents with use and function.

A similar and related dynamic exists in relation to the approach adopted to the activity of textual analysis in this study. I was determined to avoid overtly semiotic modes of analysis in which the text is reduced to a symbolic artefact to be understood simply in terms of its syntax, semantics and pragmatics. I am similarly disinclined towards hermeneutic approaches which fetishize interpretation to the point that the content of the discourse becomes a secondary concern and the act of interpretation itself becomes the primary object of research. As such, I am drawn towards a Foucauldian frame of analysis. Although his early published work betrays elements of a Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology, his main body of work – at least superficially – appears to disregard all focus on implicit meaning of discourse in favour of a preoccupation with its material and social effects. This appears evident in Foucault's own account of his method, when he explains that it:

> tries not to define the thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations that are concealed or revealed in discourses themselves; those discourses as practices obeying certain rules. It does not treat discourse as a sign of something else; as an element that ought to be transparent but whose unfortunate opacity must often be pierced if one is to reach the depth of the essential in the place in which it is held in reserve; it is concerned with the discourse in its own volume, as a monument. It is not an interpretive discipline; it does not seek another better hidden discourse (Foucault 1979:155)

Within this frame, the analysis of discourse and text 'is a historical analysis, but one that avoids all interpretation' (Foucault 1979:123). Such statements have led many, including Johan Fornas, to describe Foucault's method as explicitly anti-hermeneutic (2012). Fornas argues that to deploy Foucauldian discourse analysis is to:

> replace rather than supplement any interpretive efforts….and instead apply a principle of exteriority that describes the spatial and embodied mechanisms through which discourses work without asking what they mean. (2012:498)

However, Fornas' reading of Foucault is problematic in view of the orientation of this study. Although I seek to avoid the fetishism of interpretation that I feel arises from many hermeneutic approaches, I do not intend to abandon interpretation completely in favour of a sole focus upon the material effects of the texts I am analysing. A critical interrogation of the role of culture in HTS research would be wholly inadequate without any consideration of implicit meaning whatsoever. The practices, processes and real-world applications that have emerged from the discourses are not the primary focus of this study. This research aims to negotiate the space between meaning and effect – making links between discourse and practice without making practice the object of research. The account of Foucault's approach to text articulated by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow in the introduction to their 1983 edited collection 'Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics' most accurately captures the approach to textual analysis adopted by this study. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) deny the charge that Foucault's analysis is overtly anti-hermeneutic in character, and instead describe his method as both post-hermeneutic and post-structuralist. They argue that Foucault:

> has sought to avoid the structuralist analysis which eliminates notions of meaning altogether and substitutes a formal model of human behaviour as rule-governed transformations of meaningless elements; to avoid the phenomenological project of tracing all meaning back to the meaning-giving activity of an autonomous, transcendental subject; and finally to avoid the attempt of commentary to read off the implicit meaning of social practices as well as the hermeneutic unearthing of a different and deeper meaning of which social actors are only dimly aware (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:xxiii).

This account of Foucault which considers his method in terms of an ‘interpretive analytics’ provides an approach to textual analysis that simultaneously considers both meaning and materiality, is interpretive without fetishizing the act of interpretation, and relates discourse to practice whilst maintaining the text itself as the primary object of research.

3. The Culture Concept

3.1 Introduction

The ‘cultural turn’ in US military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan involved an increasing emphasis upon the procurement, analysis and deployment of cultural knowledge in the prosecution of counterinsurgency and stability operations in the region (Gregory 2008). While knowledge of one’s enemy has been a staple in the strategic handbook of war fighters throughout history, Montgomery McFate - American anthropologist and primary intellectual architect of HTS - has argued that specifically ‘cultural’ knowledge has become increasingly salient in the late modern moment. She suggests that this imperative for cultural knowledge emerges:

> Primarily because traditional methods of warfighting have proven inadequate in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S technology, training, and doctrine designed to counter the Soviet threat are not designed for low-intensity counterinsurgency operations where civilians mingle freely with combatants in complex urban terrain (McFate 2005a:24).

This argument is predicated upon the idea that overwhelming force and technological superiority – while highly advantageous in orthodox state on state warfare – is by no means a guarantee of success in the suppression of asymmetric, irregular insurgency. The nature of insurgency is such that ‘winning through overwhelming force is often inapplicable as a concept, if not problematic as a goal’ (McFate 22 2005a:27; Dunne 2013). She observes that; unlike conventional major combat operations, counterinsurgency must be conducted, among, and hopefully with the support of an indigenous civilian population’ (McFate 2010:191) and as such ‘counterinsurgent forces must understand the politics, society, and economics of the local population – in other words, their culture’ (McFate 2005b).

The suggestion that 'culture' can be understood as the politics, society and economics of a people is a casual and reductive formulation of a concept that has been, and remains, highly contested within the social sciences. Raymond Williams, in his entry on culture in his 1967 book 'Keywords', suggested that 'culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (1976:87). He goes on to argue that the contestation around the culture concept has arisen:

> partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought (1976:87).

Culture is not a fixed concept - possessive of stable meaning across temporal, spatial and disciplinary boundaries. Given the centrality of culture to the academic discourses surrounding the cultural turn and the HTS, it is imperative that work is done to examine the development of the concept over time in order to understand how it has functioned in the cultural turn 'as an operational category within a specific discipline at a particular historical moment' (Rabinow 1991:4). Before outlining the direction this analysis will take, it is necessary to make a number of qualifications.

Firstly, a comprehensive genealogy of the culture concept across all fields and time periods is neither practicable nor necessary within the confines of this chapter, and as such, a narrowing of the focus is required to allow for an adequate consideration of the development of the concept as it relates to the project at hand. This chapter will focus upon the development of various concepts of culture within the discipline of anthropology from the late 19th century onwards. The arguments which led to the development of the HTS, and the cultural turn more broadly, frequently emphasised the importance of anthropology to the collection and refinement of cultural knowledge. Derek Gregory identifies this centrality in the work of Montgomery McFate, as he observes:

> McFate called on anthropology to set aside its 'self-flagellation' –its colonial guilt and its modish 'postmodernism' – and to reclaim rather than repudiate its historical role 'to consolidate imperial power at the margins of empire'. In her view 'cultural knowledge and warfare are inextricably bound,' and counterinsurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq demanded nothing less than 'an immediate transformation in the

> military conceptual paradigm' infused by the discipline that she said was 'invented to support warfighting in the tribal zone': anthropology (Gregory 2008:23).

This chapter, and the wider project, will explore the extent to which the cultural turn and the HTS draw upon and deploy particular approaches to the concept of culture derived from the discipline of anthropology.

It must also be acknowledged that the culture concept has developed differently, with significant variation in influence, across different regional branches of anthropology. Susan Wright establishes distinctions between British, North-American and European anthropology, in which the concept of culture has had 'complex, contested and very different histories' (1998:7). This analysis will primarily focus upon North America, where cultural anthropology became established as one of the four main branches of the discipline. In contrast, the culture concept had more or less disappeared from the British anthropological field by the 1970s and has only recently returned to the fore aided by the influence of the emergent discipline of cultural studies (Wright 1998). This narrowing of the scope of the analysis to North American anthropology has two further benefits; firstly, the discourses which form the object of this research are almost exclusively the product of the American academy and the United States military, and therefore an examination of the development of the culture concept in the American context is most instructive for the task at hand. Secondly, Brian Foster has suggested that the influence of the ethnographic concept of culture that emerged from early 20th century American anthropology has extended beyond the academy and taken root at the very centre of the nation's geopolitical imagination. Foster explores this in relation to the influence of American academics upon American policy at the Paris Peace Talks (1917-19) where he suggests that 'American social scientists offered up a malleable concept of culture that balanced the American experience (feeding American exceptionalism) with a desire to make sense of that experience in a global arena' (Foster 2014:351). The notion that the ethnographic culture concept contributed to the negotiation of American political identity both at home and abroad will be revisited later in the concluding section of the study, and shed light upon the role of HTS discourses in the continual production of Western and American exceptionalism.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that there is a necessary degree of reduction involved in exploring the myriad of different approaches to the culture concept and grouping them into something resembling useful operational categories. This analysis will follow Susan Wright (1998) who identified three broad stages in the development of the culture concept – pre-anthropological or humanist culture, old-anthropological or ethnographic culture, and new anthropological culture. The granular analysis that follows will attempt insofar as possible to account for the particularities of the various approaches to culture considered under each heading, and they are by no means reflective of homogenous, unified or bounded approaches to the concept. However, I contend that this distinction between old and new approaches to culture can prove a vital tool for understanding the situation of the particular culture concepts which inform the discourses of the cultural turn and the HTS.

With these qualifications in mind, the chapter will proceed with an exploration of the culture concept as follows; firstly, I will introduce the pre-anthropological humanistic conception of culture which was the prevailing usage of the concept until the 19th century. Next, I will examine the contribution of the key figures of EB Tylor and Franz Boas to the emergence of the classical, pluralistic anthropological approach to culture in the late 19th and early 20th century. I will follow this by outlining some of the central characteristics which are definitive of these old anthropological or ethnographic approaches to culture. The next section will review the work of Susan Wright in which she explores the decline of classical approaches to culture within the discipline of anthropology in the latter half of the 20th century. Wright details the new meanings of culture which – shaped by the influences of poststructuralism, postcolonialism and cultural studies – became dominant within anthropology. In contrast to ethnographic understandings of culture as a set of relatively stable, fixed characteristics possessed by distinct and homogenous groups and societies, these new approaches conceptualize culture as an ongoing process of contestation. In the process I will explore Wright's arguments regarding the politicization and instrumentalization of the culture concept, and how contestation over the culture concept itself is an exemplar of new culture in action. Finally, the chapter will conclude by briefly reviewing some existing critical analyses of the culture concept in the context of the cultural turn in US military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, this will focus upon the work of David Price, Robert Albro and Rochelle Davis, who – through their analyses of US Military doctrine
e – identify the pervasive influence of a distinctly Boasian old anthropological culture concept.

3.2 From Humanistic to Pluralistic Culture: Tylor, Boas and the Old Anthropological Culture Concept

3.2.1 Humanistic Culture

The word ‘culture’ is first seen in its Latin root ‘cultura’; while this word initially had a variety of meanings, Raymond Williams suggests ‘that in all its early uses [it] was a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals’ (1976:87) and is strongly associated with the contemporary meaning of the word ‘cultivation.’ Williams goes on to trace the trajectory of the word through the English, French and German languages from the 14th through the 17th centuries, but argues that ‘culture as an independent noun, an abstract process or the product of such a process, is not important before mid-18th century and is not common before mid-19th century’ (1976:88). Kroeber and Kluckhohn suggest that in the generic sense of the word, this independent noun ‘culture’:

> retains the primary notion of cultivation or becoming cultured. This was also the older meaning of “civilization.” The basic idea was first applied to individuals, and this usage still strongly persists in popular and literary English to the present time. A second concept to emerge was that of German Kultur, roughly the distinctive “higher” values or enlightenment of a society (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952).

Brian Foster, drawing on noted historian of Anthropology George Stocking, argues that this humanist version of the culture concept dominated American writing and anthropology up until the 19th century (Foster 2014:351). Implicit in this is a teleological view of human progress within which the procurement of the material and symbolic signifiers of culture was demonstrative of the relative position of an individual or society on the scale of human social evolution. Stocking describes this when he observes:

> Whether in the humanist or evolutionist sense, [culture] was associated with the progressive accumulation of the characteristic manifestations of human creativity: art, science, knowledge, refinement – those things

> that freed man[sic] from control by nature, by environment, by reflex, by instinct, by habit, or by custom (Stocking 1966:870).

This humanistic conception of the culture concept was absolutistic, singular and progressive, in direct opposition to the anthropological view which would come to understand culture as relativistic, plural and homeostatic (Stocking 1966:868). This view of culture was central to the hierarchical ordering of individuals and societies, but this did not occur through the privileging of one distinct and bounded culture over another; rather, individuals and nations were ordered according to perceived differences in the levels of attainment of a singular and absolute culture. In this way, the humanistic conception of culture becomes broadly analogous with the concept of civilisation. Michael Fischer argues that 19th century England and France viewed themselves as 'the vanguard of universal civilisation, carriers of comparative knowledge from which education and reason could devise progressively more human, efficient, just and free societies (Fischer 2007:9). Foster observes that up until World War 1, there was a considerable degree of anxiety in the United States regarding their position on this civilizational ladder because 'Europe served as the touchstone of culture and civility' (Foster 2014:251). The extent to which this anxiety contributed to the transformation of the culture concept remains unclear, but from the late-19th century onwards, America – and American anthropology in particular - became the centre of the emergence of a new, pluralistic conception of culture, which we now refer to as the 'old anthropological idea of culture' (Wright 1998, Finlay 2008).

3.2.2 Herder and EB Tylor: pre-American pluralistic culture.

While the development of pluralistic, ethnographic conceptions of the culture concept is generally associated with United States, it was Europe where the earliest references to relativistic approaches to the term can be found. There is increasing recognition of the contribution of German philosopher Johanne Gottfried Herder in this regard (Finlay 2008). Raymond Williams remarks that:

> In his unfinished Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1784-91) [Herder] wrote of Cultur: "nothing is more indeterminate than this word, and nothing more deceptive than its application to all nations and periods". He attacked the assumption of the universal histories that

> “civilization” or “culture” - the historical self-development of humanity - was what we would now call a unilinear process, leading to the high and dominant point of 18th century European culture (1976:89).

Williams goes on to describe how Herder explicitly argues for the need to speak of ‘cultures’ in the plural, and account for the specificity and variability of cultures both across different nations and time periods, and between different social and economic groups within nations themselves (1976:89). Herder’s reimagining of culture resonates strongly with the anthropological accounts of culture that emerged in the early 20th century; both Broce (1986) and Zammito (2002) have explored the relationship between Herder’s philosophy and the development of the discipline of anthropology and the practice of ethnography more broadly. However, it would be almost a century before anything approximating this notion of culture could be found in an anthropological text.

The first formulation of an anthropological definition of the culture concept is widely credited to British anthropologist EB Tylor. In his 1871 book *Primitive Culture: Research into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom,* Tylor defines culture as:

> that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man[sic] as a member of society.

Tylor’s definition remains one of the most widely cited definitions of culture within the social sciences today. A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn - whose 1952 book *Culture: a critical review* sought to present a comprehensive overview of the history of the culture concept to that point – suggest that Tylor’s definition, and his approach to culture more generally, was the key transitional moment in the shift from humanistic to pluralistic anthropological culture within the discipline. They suggest that this definition provided ‘the first canonical counterpoint to definitions of culture as the best productions in aesthetics, knowledge and morals’ (Fischer 2007:2). Beyond simply redefining the culture concept itself, Kroeber and Kluckhohn credit Tylor with laying the foundation for an entirely new mode of anthropological analysis – the practice of ethnography. They argue that in putting forward a redefinition of culture, Tylor:

> was deliberately establishing a science by defining its subject matter. That he made this definition the first sentence of a book shows that he was conscious of this procedure. (1952:149-150)

Having identified the importance of Tylor to the refinement of the pluralistic culture concept, and its role in the development of the practice of ethnography, Kroeber and Kluckhohn were baffled by the failure to build upon Tylor's definition in the later decades of the 19th century. They claim that it was 1920 – almost 50 years later – before Tylor's version of the culture concept is elaborated upon in any meaningful fashion, and even longer before a pluralistic culture definition would find its way into English dictionaries. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn, their own mentor, Franz Boas, was a major reason for this failure to build upon Tylor:

> [Boas] contributed little to Tylor's attempt to isolate and clarify the concept of culture……[and] indirectly he hindered its progress by diverting attention to other problems (1952:151).

However, George Stocking puts forward a compelling alternative to this narrative, and in doing so he positions Boas, not Tylor, as the central figure in the development of a pluralistic, ethnographic conception of culture.

3.2.3 EB Tylor: humanistic or relativistic culture?

Stocking argues that Kroeber and Kluckhohn's attempts to account for a lag in the development of the anthropological conception of culture in the late 19th century was misplaced. He explains, 'if the modern anthropological idea had not yet emerged, then the problem of the delay in its elaboration evaporates' (1966:869). Several critical analyses [see Stocking 1963, Bennett 1998, Wolfe 1999] have suggested that Tylor's definition is not representative of an early version of a pluralistic, ethnographic culture concept, but rather represents a reworking of a humanistic conception of culture and its reconciliation with social evolutionism. These studies demonstrate the connections

Tylor's concept has 'with Eurocentric cultural hierarchies, evolutionary conceptions of racial difference and genocidal colonial projects' (Bennett 2015:547). Stocking summarises the case against Tylor when he comments:

> His actual usage of the word 'culture' was singular and hierarchical if not absolutistic, and lacked any anthropological weight of "inherited names" in the determination of behaviour. Tylor recognised the existence of custom and tradition, but "culture" was most definitely not their synonym. It was identified rather with those creative rational capacities that would liberate mankind from Walter Bagehot's "cake of custom" and enable it to move consciously up the road of "verifiable progress." Far from defining the modern anthropological concept, Tylor took the contemporary humanist idea of culture and fitted it into the framework of progressive social evolutionism (Stocking 1966:869).

According to Stocking, the move from a pre-anthropological concept of culture to ethnographic culture is most plainly demonstrated in the adoption of the plural form of the noun. There is not a single instance in Tylor's writing where the word culture appears in its plural form (Stocking 1966:871) Furthermore, he finds no evidence that Tylor conceives of culture in terms of inherited meanings which determine behaviour; for Tylor culture remained associated with the attainment of those capacities necessary to overcome the shackles of custom which restrain the march of progress. Others such as Wright (1998), present a slightly more pluralistic account of Tylor's culture concept. She observes that:

> Tylor's own approach was to combine Herder's romantic idea, that nations, groups within nations, and peoples at different periods have distinctive cultures, with the enlightenment idea that each of these cultures was at a different stage in the evolution of civilization, or in a progression towards European rationality (Wright 1998:7).

The extent to which Tylor's culture concept demonstrated a shift toward pluralism is subject to contestation, but there is no doubt that it rested upon a perspective which viewed difference firmly in terms of differential positioning on a ladder of progressive social evolution towards 'rational European civilization'. This bore little resemblance to Herder's initial pluralisation of the culture concept and has no more than a tenuous

relation to the fully elaborated ethnographic culture that would emerge in the early 20th century.

3.2.4 Franz Boas and the Emergence of Ethnographic Culture

According to Stocking, far from impeding the development of the culture concept, Franz Boas played a vital role in the emergence of a truly pluralistic, ethnographic conception of it (1966:870). Kroeber and Kluckhohn's history of the culture concept was largely focused around definitions, and Stocking suggests that this may go some way to explaining their inadequate consideration of the contribution of their mentor - given that Boas did not put forward a formalised definition of culture until the 1930s. Boas was not a relativist from the outset, and his early work contained a notion of culture that was entirely consistent with the traditional humanist usage (Stocking 1966:870). However, by 1911, Boas' work demonstrates a clear development in his use of the term. Stocking observes that by this time the traditional humanist term culture had been completely replaced by the word civilization. He suggests that it was at this point, 'Boas sensed that the world "culture", was better reserved for the "cultures" of individual human groups (1966:871). Boas' use of the plural 'cultures' is also significant. As Stocking remarks:

> In extended researches into American social science between 1890 and 1915, I found no instance of the plural form [cultures] in writers other than Boas prior to 1895. Men [sic] referred to "cultural stages" or "forms of culture," as indeed Tylor had before, but they did not speak of "cultures." The plural appears with regularity only in the first generation of Boas' students around 1910. (1966:871)

It is clear that Boas was a vital figure in the shift away from a singular, absolutist culture toward a more pluralistic and relativistic notion; however, perhaps his most significant contribution relates to the inversion of the relationship between the notion of culture and behaviour 'with the concept [culture] acquiring the freighting of behavioural determinism that is the peculiarly anthropological component of its modern anthropological meaning' (Stocking 1966:872). The notion of culture as a determinant of behaviour was central to Boas' critique of racial evolutionist accounts of difference. Foster observes that:

> Boas was exceptional in that he attacked the dominant racial evolutionists of his time, who had perpetuated the idea that race determined mental capacity and that this capacity fit on a static hierarchy, where cultured Europeans and Euro-Americans represented the peak of civilized development. Boas' work on Indigenous groups in North America argued that "primitive" societies shared characteristic mental powers with modern civilizations and that, in each and every historical and contemporary environment, mental powers were formed through an interaction with custom and traditions [culture] that were generationally transmitted (Foster 2014:351).

It was through the actual practice of ethnographic research that Boas' contribution to the emergent anthropological culture concept is rendered most clearly visible. Through his fieldwork Boas observed that patterns of behaviour were passed on through generations, and that this was common to all people, regardless of race or supposed stage of civilizational evolution (Foster 2014). Furthermore, the particularity of these patterns of behaviour was not biologically determined, rather it was rooted in custom and tradition that emerged as 'a relative and functional reaction to a particular environment' (Foster 2014:352). Foster explains the implications of Boas' when he observes:

> By this logic, Native and African Americans might lay claim to the mantle of culture as behaviours and traditions within their own circumscribed identities, bound together by historical and sociological forces handed down across the generations and constituting a solidarity or collective consciousness that defined a nation (Foster 2014:352).

Stocking accepts that Boas' cultural determinism, and the beginnings of a truly relativistic culture concept, are not immediately evident in Boas' work, and their elucidation has required a degree of extrapolation (Stocking 1966:879). He admits that Boas' – despite making progress in this direction – never fully abandoned liberal ideas of progress as civilisation, and even in his latter works there remain instances of the old humanistic usage of the word culture. But this does not diminish Boas' importance to the emergence of the anthropological culture concept; according to Stocking, Boas' was the vital transitional figure whose early articulations of a relativistic idea of culture would be

adopted by his students, and developed into what we would now refer to as 'the old anthropological idea of culture' (Stocking 1966, Wright 1998). By the mid-20th century the notion of cultural relativism was axiomatic in the discipline of anthropology. Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Melville Herskovitz, and Ralph Linton were among the myriad of Boas' students to make significant contributions to the elaboration of the concept, and over the course of the early decades of the 20th century, cultural anthropology, with its emphasis upon the deployment of ethnographic research and participant observation to explore cultural variation and particularity, became a firmly established branch of the discipline.

A comprehensive exploration of the trajectory of the relativistic culture concept within 20th century would be too large an undertaking for the chapter at hand. Finlay observes that the extent to which cultural pluralism was embedded in Anthropology by the mid-century is evidenced by the response of the American Anthropological Association [AAA] to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Finlay 2008:282). In line with the liberal enlightenment tradition, the declaration proclaimed that rights were the preserve of individuals as unique and distinct subjects. This individualist orientation of the discourse was incompatible with the relationship between culture and identity which had emerged in the Boasian ethnographic tradition, and in response the AAA issued a statement which argued:

> The individual realises his personality through his culture, hence a respect for individual differences entails a respect for cultural differences.... There can be no individual freedom, that is, when the group with which the individual identifies is not free. There can be no full development of the individual personality as long as the individual is told, by men who have the power to enforce their commands, that the way of life of his group is inferior to that of those who wield the power. (Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association 1947: 541)

According to this logic, cultural particularity was not just an observable phenomenon to by investigated and understood, rather it formed an essential feature of the identity and personality of every individual. Cultural variation - the distribution of identities as distinct, separate, and identifiable cultures - was a defining characteristic of human society.

3.2.5 The Characteristics of the Old Anthropological Culture Concept

As mentioned previously, Susan Wright (1998) posits a clearly identifiable distinction between old and new anthropological meanings of the term culture. The so called 'old idea of culture' refers broadly to the pluralistic Boasian culture concepts which dominated anthropology for the majority of the 20th century. Wright acknowledges the reduction involved in this labelling and accepts that there was widespread variation among the different approaches that fall under the banner of old culture. She comments:

> Anthropologists differed profoundly in their theories and in the aspects of western thought that they questioned, but they shared the idea of the world as made up of 'peoples', each with a coherent way of life, or "culture"' (Wright 1998:8).

Wright goes on to further identify a series of assumptions that are implicit in these approaches to culture; she suggests they take cultures to be bounded small scale entities with clearly definable characteristics. Both the boundaries, and indeed the characteristics themselves are taken to be relatively unchanging and self-reproducing in a balanced equilibrium. They assume an 'authentic culture' as an underlying system of shared meanings and conceive of cultural groups as comprised of relatively homogenous individuals with little variation (Wright 1998:8). Each of these characteristics is echoed in Andrew Finlay's concise definition of the old culture concept. For Finlay:

> The 'old' idea of culture is associated with a relativistic view of a world made up of discrete peoples, each with their own distinct way of life. In this worldview, cultures are spatially located and based on inherited meanings that are shared equally by all the members of the culture. It is this evocation of unchanging sameness and homogeneity that carries the taint of essentialism and encourages the reductiveness typical of essentialist thinking (Finlay 2008:282).

Stocking (1966) has demonstrated that Boas' development of the culture concept arose out of a rejection of a positivist frame in favour of an approach to the study of difference that was rooted in historicism. Detaching difference from biological determinism and emphasising the notion that culture is learned and not innate, Boasian culture had the potential to allow for the radical possibility of change (Abu-Lughod 1991:141). However, despite this apparently anti-essentialist potential, the practice of ethnography rooted in the old anthropological idea of culture would have precisely the opposite effect. Instead of viewing culture in terms of flux, these approaches 'ignore the ways in which experiences have been constructed historically and change over time' (Abu-Lughod 1991:142). The roots of this ahistoricism can be traced back to Boas; Stocking identified Boas' opposition of anthropological culture as 'homeostatic' in contrast to humanistic culture which emphasised the notion of progress. This emphasis upon an internal equilibrium of mutually interdependent parts immediately restricted the potential for an adequate consideration of change in ethnographic practice. Wright observes this in relation to British functionalist anthropologists, who were:

> criticised for having treated culture as a small scale, bounded entity organized through economic, social and political institutions which interacted as a self-contained whole sustained in a static equilibrium. This had clearly been a fiction when most of the places studied, however remote, were being visited not just by anthropologists, but by merchants, missionaries and colonial administrators. Societies were neither unchanging nor bounded, but part of a world order dominated first by colonialism and later by nation states, international capitalism and international agencies. These had been left out of the picture of "cultures" as ahistorical, self-contained entities (Gough 1968; Wright 1998:8).

This fundamentally essentialist view of culture as static and unchanging was deeply intertwined with the tendency of Boasian ethnography to represent cultures as homogenous with high levels of internal cohesion around meanings. Lila Abu-Lughod identifies how:

> Organic metaphors of wholeness and the methodology of holism that characterizes anthropology both favor coherence, which in turn

> contributes to the perception of communities as bounded and discrete (1991:142).

Abu-Lughod goes on to argue that this problem emerges from the proclivity for generalisation in ethnographic practice, which she contends will invariably result in the production of homogeneity, coherence and timelessness (1991:475). She observes that:

> The appearance of an absence of internal differentiation makes it easier to conceive of a group of people as a discrete, bounded entity, like the “the Nuer; "the Balinese, and "the Awlad' Ali Bedouin” who do this or that and believe such-and-such. The effort to produce general ethnographic descriptions of people's beliefs or actions tends to smooth over contradictions, conflicts of interest, and doubts and arguments, not to mention changing motivations and circumstances. The erasure of time and conflict make what is inside the boundary set up by homogenization something essential and fixed (Abu-Lughod 1991:145).

Wright suggests that by the 1970s, old anthropological ideas of culture had lost all pretensions to radical emancipatory possibilities, and instead the notion of distinct pluralistic cultures had been fully co-opted into rationalisations for colonialism (Wright 1998:8). This trajectory, along with the influences of post-modernist, post-colonial and post-structuralist theory, led anthropologists to develop new ways of thinking about culture. Wright argues that these new meanings of culture have largely replaced the old culture concept within the academy, but outside the academy the old meaning remains widespread in public discourse (Wright 1998:8). I contend that Wright has underestimated the endurance of the old culture concept in academic thought, as the remainder of this chapter, and this research more broadly will demonstrate.

3.3 New Meanings of Culture: flux, resistance and instrumentality.

3.3.1 New Anthropological Culture

In line with her account of old anthropological approaches to culture, Susan Wright identifies a series of commonalities which tie together a heterogenous assemblage of discourses on culture in the latter decades of the 20th Century (Wright 1998). According to Wright, these new approaches to culture within anthropology and cultural studies have several common characteristics; firstly, they disavowed the notion that cultures were distinguished by a checklist of relatively fixed, inherited customs and traditions, and instead saw culture as an active, and continuous process of meaning making (Wright 1998:10). They also implied that the sites at which this meaning making takes place are not bounded, enclosed territories, rather it involves the negotiation of local, national and worldwide links. Within this frame, 'the way clusters of concepts form is historically specific, and ideas never form a closed or coherent whole' (Wright 1998:10). Wright even accounts for the past misidentification of holistic, bounded cultures and suggests that:

> In its hegemonic form, culture appears coherent, systematic, consensual, like an object, beyond human agency, not ideological – like the old idea of culture (Wright 1998:10).

This conceives of culture as a chimera, masking dominant ideology behind a veil of primordial inheritance. Michael Fischer captures the spirit of these new meanings of culture when he comments:

> there is no culture, and all we do is cultural. Culture is not a variable; culture is relational, it is elsewhere or in passage, it is where meaning is woven and renewed, often through gaps and silences, and forces beyond the conscious control of individuals, and yet serves as the space where individual and institutional social responsibility and ethical struggle take place (2007:39).

3.3.2 The Postmodern Moment

Explanations for the emergence of these new meanings of culture are often framed in terms of the fracturing forces of postmodernity and globalisation. The suggestion is that the development of global communication networks and technologies, increasing integration of the global financial system, and transnational flows of people, goods and capital have complicated the pluralistic notion of the world as a neat mosaic of distinct and bounded cultures (Wright 1998:8). While these factors undeniably influenced re-workings of the culture concept to some degree, an over-emphasis upon them as causal explanations risks implying that prior to the post-modern moment the cultural mosaic representation of the world, and the assumptions of the old anthropological idea, accurately accounted for the distribution of culture. Wright denies this is the case and argues that the challenges to old culture posed by 'dislocated histories and hybridised ethnicities' are not just features of postmodern, globalized societies. She contends that:

> This is not just a Western urban phenomenon of the 1990s. In a tribe in Iran where I did fieldwork in the 1970s, the population was made up of layers of refugees. Multiple identities were constantly negotiated; links with people in tribes from which they had fled were maintained or re-invented: there was no bounded, consensual, authentic, ahistorical, culture. Theoretical developments in cultural studies, and in post-structural and feminist anthropology, have led us to understand that **"cultures" are not, nor ever were, naturally bounded entities** (Wright 1998:9 Emphasis Added).

Wright points to Sally Merry's (1998) examination of 18th and 19th century Hawaii where people from a variety of places lived side by side in what she terms a 'contact zone' as opposed to a 'local community.' She demonstrates how people from diverse backgrounds constantly negotiated and contested meaning and attempted to 'define or seize control of symbols or practices' (Wright 1998:9) (Merry 1998). Within this frame, symbols and ideas remained in a constant state of flux; never attaining a stable or fixed meaning, and remaining 'polyvalent, fluid and hybridised' (Wright 1998:9).

This distinctly Gramscian formulation conceives of culture as a mechanism and site of societal contestation. According to Wright, Merry's work on Hawaii perfectly illustrates this notion of culture as a 'contested process of meaning making' (Wright 1998:9). For Wright, the persistent struggle to control the meaning of key terms and concepts raises a number of salient questions. She suggests that we must ask:

> how are these concepts used and contested by differently positioned actors who draw on local, national and global links in unequal relations of power? How is the contest framed by implicit practices and rules – or do actors challenge, stretch or reinterpret them as part of the contest too? In a flow of events, who has the power to define? How do they prevent other ways of thinking about these concepts from being heard? How do they manage to make their meanings stick, and use institutions to make their meanings authoritative? With what material outcomes? (Wright 1998:9)

Drawing upon Sue Reinhold's (1994) exploration of the ideological contestation around the state's power to define attitudes to homosexuality in 1980s Britain, Wright addresses these questions by proposing a three-stage process through which this kind of contestation occurs (Wright 1998:9). Firstly, she suggests, identifiable agents put forth a specific set of ideological assertions which 'give a particular view of the world, of how people should be and behave, and what should be seen as the "reality" of their society and history' (Wright 1998:9). Secondly, these ideological values become institutionalized, thus moving beyond their connection to identifiable agents to become facets of 'non-agentic power' in a society. These values, meanings, rules and epistemological assumptions become the foundation of new institutional practices, which, in turn, go on to shape 'perceptions, categories, values and behaviour' in a society (Wright 1998:9). In the third and final stage of this process, according to Wright, a key idea or ideological assumption regarding one aspect of life will bleed into 'other domains (outside of the activities of the state) and becomes a diffused and prevalent way of thinking about everyday life' (Wright 1998:9).

The key feature of new anthropological understandings of culture is that these processes of meaning-making and contestation do not end with the triumph of a fixed and dominant set of values or ideas. Rather, the process is continuous and open-ended. It is precisely because of this that culture cannot be understood as a relatively stable or fixed set of ideas or values, but instead must be understood as constantly in motion and

flux. Once again citing Merry's work on Hawaii, Wright explains that despite various agents constantly battling for the power to define:

> Symbols and ideas never acquired a closed or coherent set of meanings: they were polyvalent, fluid and hybridized. Key terms shifted in meaning at different historical times (Wright 1998:9).

Despite this, Wright accepts that when 'a coalition of actors gained ascendancy in a specific historical moment, they institutionalized their meaning of key terms in law' (Wright 1998:9). This cuts to the core of new anthropological critiques of old anthropological approaches to culture. Boasian representations of neatly bounded cultures with specific sets of innate and essential characteristics are effectively a snapshot of hegemony in a specific spatiotemporal moment. Somewhat sympathetically, Wright seems to suggest that this tendency may be a function of the way in which culture operates. She observes that:

> at its most secure, an ideology appears hegemonic. That is, it becomes so naturalized, taken for granted and "true" that alternatives are beyond the limits of the thinkable. As Comoroff and Comaroff (1992) suggest, in its hegemonic dimension, culture appears coherent, systematic, and consensual. It tries to look like an object, a thing beyond human agency, not ideological at all: in short, like the old idea of authentic culture (Wright 1998:9-10).

This applies to the way in which culture is perceived by individuals in everyday life - once again reflecting a distinctly Gramscian understanding of Hegemony in which specific ideology is depoliticized and becomes ingrained in our 'common-sense' understandings of the world around us. However, Wright primarily offers this as a critique of the Boasian culture concept and its deployment in anthropology. She describes how:

> anthropologists themselves had previously mistaken hegemonic ideologies for authentic culture, and in the process, endorsed those in the community with the ascendant power to define the characteristics of their 'culture' and project it as timeless and objective (Wright 1998:10).

3.3.3 The Culture Concept as Site of Contestation

In a somewhat meta twist to the analysis, Wright observes that the understanding of culture as a process of contestation is exemplified by the struggles surrounding the definition of the culture concept itself. She argues, the adoption of new anthropological approaches to culture necessarily demands recognition of the fact that:

> academic definitions of "culture" are themselves positioned and political and therefore a resource for anthropologists and others to use in establishing or challenging processes of domination and marginalization (Wright 1998:14).

While this chapter has provided a superficial genealogical overview of the trajectory of the concept of culture within the academy, it has avoided substantive engagement with the history of how specific conceptions of culture have been instrumentalized and politicized. Wright offers three distinct examples of the instrumentalization of culture. Firstly, she describes the appropriation of a new approach to culture by the 'New Right' in the UK during the 1980s. She explores how the movement adopted a perspective influenced by Gramscian ideas of hegemony, and expanded the scope of ideological contestation beyond the political sphere to deliberately contest the broader realm of culture in British society. The purpose of this strategy was not to embrace the mutable and ever-changing nature of culture, but rather to aggressively defend dominant notions of Britishness through interventions around concepts such as difference, race and culture (1998:10). Citing Paul Gilroy (1987:60), Wright contends that:

> the New Right defined "Englishness", as the hegemonic core of Britishness, through culture. They agreed with the anthropological idea that nations and cultures are historically constituted, not biologically or ontologically given. However, they used this idea not to erode but to reinforce exclusiveness (Wright 1998:10).

The second example of the instrumentalization of culture offered by Wright relates to the pervasiveness of ideas of culture in the corporate sphere. Wright describes how, beginning in the 1980s, management studies research began to appropriate anthropological notions of culture and apply them to analyses of the organizational structures and practices of successful companies (Wright 1998:11). From the 1990s onwards, the use of the term 'corporate culture' has become widespread, not just in the

study of organizations, but also in the way companies and corporate entities structure, organize and understand themselves. According to Wright, 'companies are using both old and new ideas of "culture" as tools of management' (Wright 1998:11). While these examples of the instrumentalization of an anthropological culture concept are instructive, it is the third example proffered which is by far the most salient to the research at hand – the relationship between the culture concept and discourses of development.

Wright's third case involves the entrance of the culture concept into the realm of international development. Interestingly, Wright describes this as a 'new domain' for anthropological culture. While undoubtedly the contemporary field of international development studies, and indeed the material practices of liberal intervention, global development, international peacekeeping and humanitarian aid have all undergone a cultural turn in the latter half of the 20th century, to suggest this is a new application for instrumentalized anthropological culture would be misleading. Rather, the deployment of instrumentalized culture as a technology of 'overseas' intervention is as old as the culture concept itself. Despite this curious omission, Wright's explication of the appearance of culture in two distinct cases pertaining to overseas development is undoubtedly salient to the research at hand. Wright sets out these cases when she comments:

> In the first example, an international agency, UNESCO, in its vision of a new ethical world order, maps out a world made of 'cultures' as discrete entities, without engaging with the issue of contestation over the power to define. In contrast, in the second example, Kayapo leaders have used ethnographic film to assert their own definition of their 'culture' and used the strategies others have used against them to challenge the processes that have marginalized them (Wright 1998:12).

We have already established Wright's view that instrumentalized culture can and is used to both establish and challenge 'processes of domination and marginalization (Wright1998:14), and in these cases Wright presents us with an example of each in action. One case involves a top-down attempt by Western experts impose their definitions of reality upon the world, while the other represents the conscious appropriation of a Western understanding of culture by an indigenous people as a strategic act of resistance. Unlike the previously considered examples of the New Right in the UK and the transposition of anthropological culture into the corporate world, neither of these cases involve new anthropological versions of the culture concept. The pervasiveness of old anthropological culture in discourses of Western intervention is

noteworthy, and the exploration of this phenomenon in relation to the Human Terrain System will be a re-current theme throughout this thesis.

The first case examined by Wright is that of the indigenous population of Kayapo in Brazil. Based upon the work of anthropologist Terrance Turner, Wright describes how the people of Kayapo appropriated the conceptual framework of 'culture' from visiting anthropologists. Prior to their encounters with Western anthropologists, the Kayapo did not conceptualise the structure and meanings of their everyday lives in terms of any holistic concept resembling culture. Turner argues that the absence of such a framework prevented the Kayapo people from protecting themselves in their interactions with the state and other indigenous peoples, and as such faced the threat of erasure and subjugation (Wright 1998:14). Wright describes how the Kayapo:

> realized that what the missionaries and state administrators used as justification for their subordination and exploitation, another set of Westerners [as exemplified by visiting anthropologists] valued highly. "Culture", which had seemed an impediment, now appeared as a resource to negotiate their co-existence with the dominant society (Wright 1998:14).

The case of the Kayapo is a paragon of strategic essentialist resistance; they deliberately set about framing the distinctiveness of their identity in terms of an old anthropological culture. Through a series of documentaries and other displays they presented an image of a bounded and unique culture in a manner digestible to Western audiences. Wright describes how they:

> choreographed themselves for the western media in order to gain support of the western audience and add pressure on the [Brazilian] government. Gone were the shorts, T-shirts and haircuts that had appeased the missionaries; with men's bare chests, body ornament and long ritual dances, the Kayapo performed their "culture" as a strategy in their increasingly confident opposition to the state (Wright 1998:14).

Through seizing control of the power to define, the Kayapo people have demonstrated the potential to incorporate an instrumentalized culture concept into strategies of indigenous resistance to erasure and subjugation. However, while this type of bottom up emancipatory instrumentalization is possible, it is not a central concern of the research at hand. Rather, what this research is concerned with is the top down weaponization of

culture as a technology of domination and governance, and as such, Wright's description of the 1995 UNESCO report 'Our Creative Diversity' is a more salient example of the relationship between the culture concept and international development.

The report came at the conclusion of the UN decade for culture and diversity, and according to Wright, marked 'an opportunity for anthropologists to have an overt influence on the use of the concept of "culture" (Wright 1998:12). As discussed previously, by this time Boasian conceptions of culture had largely fallen from favour within the field of anthropology, and as such, one would have expected an anthropologically derived formulation of culture to reflect the new approaches to the concept which were dominant in contemporaneous research. However, despite substantive contributions from some of the most prominent and recognizable names in anthropology – including Marshall Sahlins and Claud Lévi-Strauss – the report put forward anachronistic definitions of culture directly derived from a distinctly old anthropological approach to the concept (Wright 1998:13). While the disconnect between the report and the contemporaneous usages of culture within anthropology is striking, it is perhaps unsurprising given the influence of Sahlins in particular. Sahlins has remained a staunch defender of Boasian culture; his position is most succinctly expressed in a 1998 paper entitled 'Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture' in which he argues for the continued significance and utility of old anthropological culture - refuting many of the criticisms of Boas and his contemporaries, and insisting they 'had ideas about culture that are still pertinent to the understanding of its contemporary forms and processes' (Sahlins 1999:400). The UNESCO report depicts a view of the world as composed of a mosaic of distinct and homogenous cultures – the boundaries of which are increasingly threatened by transnational flows of people, ideas and meanings. Wright observes that according to the report:

> the world consists of 10,000 distinct societies in 200 states (1995:16). Unfortunately, according to the report, people are mixing as never before (1995:9). Instead, their distinctiveness should be encouraged, as it is by looking across the boundaries between distinct cultures that people gain ideas for alternative ways of living. The report's recipe for creativity, experimentation, innovation and the dynamic of progress is a diversity of distinct entities with clear boundaries (UNESCO 1995:15, Wright 1998:13)

The report, and the old anthropological view of culture upon which it relies, serves almost as a manifesto for a culture turn in international development. It suggests that the failure

to adequately account for culture is the single most important explanatory factor in accounting for the failures of global development to that point. Wright comments that:

> frustrated expectations coupled with globalization, and the collapse of the bipolar world order (1995:9,28), it is argued, have led to confrontations between narrow group identities over scarce resources (1995:9) which have been manipulated into violence (1995:16). Whereas failed development gives rise to this destructive aspect of cultural identities of "peoples", successful development would result in a flourishing of culture, creativity and progress (Wright 1998:12).

The implications of the report's approach to culture are significant. It suggests that interaction and flows between cultures are both inevitable and desirable, but strongly argues that such exchange can only take place successfully 'between distinct entities with clear boundaries' (1995:15). The rationale here is one of preservation, where the distinctiveness of individual cultures must be nurtured and maintained so as to enable them to engage with each other in a creative and productive manner. Herein lies the foundational thesis of the broader cultural turn in the study of late modern warfare; conflict has increasingly been framed in terms of clashes of antagonistic cultures where global geopolitical developments and the lines of fracture of postmodernity have drawn groups into conflict with one another. The report frames these outcomes as a consequence of failed development, which in turn is rooted in the failure of international development to adequately account for the distinctiveness of individual cultures. The solution, according to UNESCO, amounts to a 'top-down grand plan for a pluralism of bounded cultures' (Wright 1998:13).

There is one major difference between these two examples of the instrumentalization of culture which relates to the degree to which the political dimension of the process is recognized and acknowledged. Wright observes that:

> Kayapo politicians seem to be fully aware of the constructedness of 'culture'. They seem to have dealt with contest with themselves over the power to define. They exploited the way the old idea of 'culture' masks power differentials within groups and they borrowed western filmic tropes of realism and authenticity… They defined culture for themselves and used it to set the terms of their relations with the 'outside world' (Wright 1998:14).

In effect, the Kayapo example represents a conscious appropriation of the power to define culture and its strategic deployment towards the realisation of emancipatory political ends. In stark contrast to this, Wright comments that:

> The UNESCO Report, *Our Creative Diversity,* seems to be seeking the positive outcomes from the autonomous definition of culture evident among the Kayapo. However, it neglects to see that the flows of creativity that is associates with vigorous 'cultures' is a product of continuous assertion of the power to define in a political process involving local, national and international actors. This political dimension of meaning making, well understood by the Kayapo politicians, is a dynamic which is absent from the UNESCO report (Wright 1998:14).

Unlike the Kayapo, the experts responsible for the UNESCO report demonstrate no reflexive awareness of their role in the production of culture. While the Kayapo clearly recognize the power to define as a political strategy, the UNESCO report makes no attempt to account for the political dimension involved in its power to define and make-meaning. This is entirely consistent with the positivistic epistemologies pervasive in Western approaches to knowledge production. The expert, in the process of defining the reality of the world, disavows any political dimension to the process, and instead conceives of the process of knowledge production in terms of the objective discovery of universal, objectives truths about the nature of the world. The failure to account for the subjective political dimension of its attempts to define the world is central to the way in which the West positions itself as exceptional. While the world may be a mosaic of distinct and bounded cultures according to UNESCO, the West – through its commitment to science and reason – enjoys a privileged access to the objective reality of the world which transcends cultural particularity. Bruno Latour succinctly captures this attitude when he comments:

> "the West" was not a culture "among" others since it enjoyed a privileged access to [scientific] nature and its already-accomplished unification. Europeans, Americans, Australians and later Japanese certainly possessed cultural traits which identified them as unique

> cultural groups, but their access to [scientific] nature swiftly made these superficial differences disappear. (Latour 2002:10)

The significance of this failure to consider the political dimensions of the Western knowledge production and its power to define will be taken up later, but for now this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of some existing critical work which examines the role of old anthropological culture concept in the cultural turn in US military policy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

3.4 Conclusion: The Persistence of Old Culture in the Case of the Cultural Turn

This chapter has examined the trajectory of the culture concept, the characteristics of old and new approaches to culture in anthropology and the instrumentalization of the concept as a mechanism of resistance and, most importantly, domination. The following findings chapters will amount to a case study of the instrumentalization of culture in the research of the Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan. They will critically interrogate the way in which the research of HTS social scientists utilized the 'power to define' in order to facilitate US military objectives of counterinsurgency and pacification. However, before I do this, the final section of this chapter will provide a brief overview of some existing critical interventions regarding the relationship between the culture concept and the wider cultural turn in US military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Robert Albro has commented that:

> The current pursuit by the US and other militaries of greater 'cultural knowledge' is part and parcel of the recent and broad-ranging appearance of the culture concept as a problem-solving resource across a wide range of policy arenas, including, but not limited to, security, trade, development, and human rights (2010:26).

If culture was to be 'weaponized' effectively (Davis 2010) as a problem-solving resource, and if anthropological expertise were to be co-opted in the execution of this strategy, it would seem logical that such a project would draw upon the latest scholarship in the field and deploy a notion of culture that would resemble its contemporary anthropological

usage. However old anthropological ideas of culture were pervasive in the early academic and military discourses of the cultural turn. The following section will briefly examine some existing critical work around this persistence of old culture. Firstly, I will explore Rochelle Davis discussions of the culture concept in relation to the early years of the war and before secondly, exploring analysis of the 'Counterinsurgency Field Manual FM-24' the work of Roberto Gonzalez, David Price and Robert Albro.

3.4.1 Culture in the Early Period of the War

The military use of culture during World War Two was dominated by a Boasian tradition embodied in the work of his students. The influence of Ruth Benedict was particularly visible as anthropologists inspired by her work 'conducted national character studies which reduced the complexities of other nations into simplified and often pseudo-psychological profiles.' (Price 2010a:59) This continued throughout the Cold War era as exemplified in Margaret Mead's work in which she delineated what she believed to be the 'uniform features of the Soviet national character' (Price 2010a:59). Rochelle Davis (2010) suggests that these approaches to culture were heavily influential in the early periods of the war in Iraq and remained present in the burgeoning cultural turn. She argues that in the period between 2003-2007, the early military and academic material:

> described Iraqi culture with recourse to the national character studies that typified the culture research and cultural anthropology of the 1940s and 1950s. Anthropologists long ago abandoned this approach – which posited that peoples and cultures had a uniform character akin to a set of personality traits - as they found it did not adequately address cultural change over time and was frequently inaccurate (2010:9).

National character work embodies the very worst essentialising tendencies of old anthropological approaches to culture. According to Davis, this allowed for:

> an easy portrayal of what constitutes being "Iraqi" and "Arab." In this paradigm, Iraqi-ness is timeless, uniquely determined by religion and family. It is never a product of history or political forces or government policies. Instead, the materials present all Iraqis as essentially the same, thereby lumping together 27 million people of varied educational

> backgrounds, residential locations, generations, ethnicities, religions, and economic incomes, among other differences (2010:9).

These early approaches to culture are typified by material such as the 'Iraq Culture Smart Card' – a 16 panel folding pamphlet compiled by the Army and Marines in collaboration with private contractors – and the First Infantry Division 'Soldier's Handbook to Iraq' (Davis 2010). These documents sought to provide basic cultural information for soldiers being deployed to Iraq who had little or no pre-existing knowledge of the region or its people. The smart cards first appeared in 2003 and were updated regularly in the following years; by 2006 over 1.8 million of them had been requested by units in the field (Davis 2010:9). The early iterations of the cards 'portrayed Iraqis as having a unified national character, one that could be summarized in bullet points' (Davis 2010:12). This included information on the five pillars of Islam, basic Arabic vocabulary, information regarding expected behaviours during religious celebrations, and an overview of some cultural history of the region. Particularly problematic for Davis was the section on clothing and gestures, which contained images of three men wearing different colour headscarves. Davis observes:

> The Smart Card tells the reader that the white headdress signifies the man "has not made the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. The black and white is from a country with presidential rule (i.e., Libya or Egypt) and has made the *hajj*. And the red checkered is from a country with a monarch (i.e., Saudi Arabia or Jordan) and has made the *hajj*." First, there is no item of clothing that designates someone who has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca. Second, it is not clear why the Iraq Culture Smart Card mentions the other Arab countries at al...Third, by seeing Arabs' dress as determined by the type of political rule under which they live, the Iraq Culture Smart Card authors suggest that Arabs do not have individual choices over what they wear; rather, they are subjected to the dictates of their "national culture" which they follow obediently (Davis 2010:10).

This reduction of Iraqi fashion choices to a function of their political and religious identity was not just inaccurate but typified the reductive stereotyping of national character approaches to culture and identity.

The emphasis on the unity of a homogeneous national identity of the early smart cards was short-lived, and soon this was replaced by representations of Iraq as a space characterised by deep rooted, primordial sectarian division. Davis captures this development when she observes:

> The military's cultural education material also fed into the omnipresent image of a sectarian Iraq, well before sectarian fighting became sectarian. One panel of the Iraq Culture Smart Card from a 2004 edition presents what it titles as the "Cultural Groups in Iraq"—Sunni and Shi'a Arabs, Kurds, Chaldeans, Assyrians and Turkmen…… [In] this panel's vision of a nation in existence for more than 80 years, there seem to be no Iraqis who are united by a sense of national interest, patriotism or love of country. It seems instead that ethnic and/or religious tensions trump all else. Put another way, solders are instructed that the national character of Iraq is hopelessly riven by primordial ethnic and sectarian hatreds. (Davis 2010:12)

While this somewhat contradicts the previous ascription of a unified national character in Iraq, the concept of culture in operation remains deeply rooted in the old anthropological tradition. The unified Iraqi character is replaced by a series of bounded, essentialised, coherent cultural identities all vying for political ascendency. In this view, 'Culture was reduced to a force-field of hostilities with no space for mutuality or transculturation' (Gregory 2008:15). The extent to which images of sectarian division became ingrained in the American military psyche undoubtedly contributed to the outbreak of civil war in the country. Davis suggests that:

> The US training material helped to crystallize divisions that might have remained inchoate, by allowing the common soldier to understand the US mission as protection of the Shi'a from the Sunnis, as many did before the civil war became entrenched. During the civil strife, the Smart Cards encouraged soldiers to view inter-communal violence as something inherent to Iraq or the Muslim world and therefore beyond human control, rather than a struggle for power, money and influence in the scrum of war. A number of scholars of Iraq have written about

> the post-2003 sectarianism in Iraq and how US policies encouraged it, either directly or indirectly. (Davis 2010:12)

This propensity of American analyses to reduce violence to a matter of cultural compulsion or communal identity will be considered in detail throughout this research project. This was a central rhetorical mechanism through which insurgent violence was depoliticised and America discursively repositioned itself as a neutral arbiter of inter-communal conflict, as opposed to an invading and occupying force.

The pervasiveness of old anthropological ideas in cultural training material from the early years of the American intervention was perhaps unsurprising. Smart cards were first produced at a time when culture was largely absent from the US military lexicon, and engagement with practicing academic experts was minimal. This would change dramatically with the cultural turn; by 2006 culture had emerged as a vital weapon in the US military arsenal and anthropologists and social scientists, with their expert knowledge of the concept, were essential to its wielding. However, the co-option of academic knowledge did not lead to substantive engagement with contemporary disciplinary approaches to culture, and older approaches to the concept continued to dominate throughout the academic and military discourses of the cultural turn. To explore this, I will draw upon the work of Roberto Gonzalez, Robert Albro and David Price as they demonstrate the persistence of old culture concepts in their analyses of the 2006 US Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24 (FM 3-24).

3.4.2 Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24.

FM 3-24 was the foundational military doctrinal document of the cultural turn. General David Petraeus, head of Central Command, personally oversaw the drafting of the manual, and it was released by the Army and Marine Corps in December 2006 (Davis 2010:8). The document was the first ‘US Army manual dedicated exclusively to counterinsurgency in more than 20 years’ (Gonzalez 2007:14). It was widely distributed and received significant public attention upon its release; within two months of being uploaded on the internet the manual generated two million downloads and was even republished in paperback format by the University of Chicago Press – becoming an Amazon best seller (Gregory 2008). The Press subsequently defended the publication of the manual citing its significance as a key historical document (Price 2007:20). Although General Petraeus and Lieutenant James Amos are named in the preface, the

manual was written by dozens of unnamed contributors, including at least one anthropologist, Montgomery McFate (Gonzalez 2007a). McFate co-authored chapter 3 of the manual titled 'Intelligence in Counterinsurgency'. Roberto Gonzalez comments that the chapter:

> is essentially a primer on cultural relativism and social-structure. At times it resembles a simplified introductory anthropology textbook – though with few examples and no illustrations (2007a:15.)

In fact, the chapter more than resembles a textbook, as David Price has noted that it reproduces whole passages from historical anthropological and social scientific texts without any attribution or acknowledgement of sources (2007a:20). He cites 10 unique examples of such unacknowledged reproduction from chapter 3 alone and argues that this occurs throughout all sections of the manual. McFate defended this unattributed usage on the basis that the manual is military doctrine and not academic text and as such, 'does not have footnotes' (McFate 2007:21). However, as Price points out, the manual does indeed have footnotes and citations throughout, and expressly states in the preface that all copyrighted material will be identified in footnotes (2007:20).

FM 3-24 was the doctrinal embodiment of the spirit of the cultural turn and served as a point of departure for the development of the US military's cultural knowledge capabilities. As such, the conceptualisation of culture contained in the manual is indicative of the approach to the concept at the heart of the cultural turn. Chapter 3 of the manual defines culture as:

> a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another; learned, through a process called enculturation; shared by members of a society: there is no 'culture of one': patterned, meaning that people in a society live and think in ways forming definite, repeating patterns; changeable, through social interactions between people and groups; arbitrary, meaning that soldiers and marines should make no assumptions regarding what a society considers right and wrong, good and bad; internalized, in the sense that it is habitual,

> taken for granted, and perceived as 'natural' by people within the society (US Army 2007:68-69).

Robert Albro suggests that this definition, elements of which are taken directly and without attribution from other sources, represents 'an inadequate, undertheorized, and anachronistic concept of culture imported whole cloth from the mid-to-late twentieth century' (Albro 2010:1089). He goes on to observe, that 'from a broad disciplinary point of view, this concept of culture is too static, coherent, bounded and one-dimensional' (2010:1089). Gonzalez echoes this analysis and notes the disparity between this formulation and the contemporary consensus within the field. He comments:

> Entirely absent from this definition is the notion of culture as a product of historical processes – in spite of the fact that for at least the last quarter century anthropologists have stressed that culture has been profoundly shaped by capitalism, colonialism and other political and economic forces on a global scale. Instead, chapter 3 treats cultures as internally coherent easily bounded and one-dimensional– in a manner reminiscent of the structural-functionalists of an earlier era (2007:15).

In ascribing an internal coherence to cultural groups, the manual does not conceive of culture as a site of contestation and fails to adequately account for the actuality of difference *within* groups. Difference is central to the manual's treatment of the concept, but only insofar as it serves to demarcate the border *between* the American self and the Iraqi Other. Albro captures this when he contends that the manual:

> tends toward counterproductive "othering" practices by drawing sharp differences between "their" culture and "ours," and so constructing cultural difference as a problem to be negotiated and overcome for mission success (2010:1089).

The instrumentalised anthropology contained in the manual had little in common with the contemporary field and ignored the existence of decades worth of work on

culture from anthropologists. Albro suggests that the manual's treatment of the culture concept received a:

> quizzical reception, to say the least, from many anthropologists not directly involved in its production, who do not recognize themselves or find any significant sign of current anthropological knowledge production between its covers' (2010:1089).

However, rather than viewing this as anomalous, Albro argues that this was a logical consequence of the appropriation of anthropological knowledge in support of the realisation of military objectives. The extent to which the knowledge deployed engaged with or reflected the contemporary field was of no relevance to the project of the cultural turn. As Albro observes:

> A more variegated and multi-stranded account of the discipline's contemporary discussion of the culture concept was, after all, not the goal. Rather, the goal was to introduce "culture" into the doctrinal process only as relevant to and legible for counterinsurgency, as a new "military definition of reality," in the prescient words of C. Wright Mills (2010:1089).

David Price expands upon this, and suggests that the mechanical, disarticulated notions of culture in the manual and the anthropological theory to which they belong, were adopted:

> because they offer the promise of "managing" the complexities of culture, as if increased sensitivities, greater knowledge, panoptical legibility could be used in a linear fashion to engineer domination. Such notions of culture fit the military's structural view of the world. It is the false promise of "culture" as a controllable, linear product that drives the COIN Team's particular construction of "culture" (2009:6).

For Price and Albro, old anthropological ideas of culture were deployed because they were instrumentally useful; they present culture as a series of identifiable characteristics that are both legible and controllable from which could be derived generalisable strategies and guidelines to inform US military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. If FM 3-24 captured the spirit of the cultural turn, then the Human Terrain System was its corporeal manifestation. The project allowed for the infusion of social scientific cultural knowledge expertise into military units in the field and would directly inform the day-to-day prosecution of counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. On the surface HTS may have appeared to offer an antidote to the crude reductionism and generalisation that characterised earlier approaches to the culture concept. While these approaches emphasised broad-stroke knowledge from afar, the project would see the actual practice of ethnographic fieldwork on the ground, and was suggestive of a more situational, granular and contextual approach to the collection and refinement of cultural knowledge. However, through the analysis of the research material produced by HTS, and the reflections of former HTS members on their time with the project, the following chapters will demonstrate the extent to which the spectre of the old anthropological culture concept remained pervasive in the approaches to the weaponization of culture in Iraq and Afghanistan.

4. The Experience of the Researcher; reflections on/from the expert in the field.

> The Orientalist was an expert, like Renan or Lane, whose job in society was to interpret the Orient for his compatriots. The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object. (Said 2003:222.)

4.1 Introduction

The Human Terrain System was but one dimension of the wider 'cultural turn' in US military policy in Iraq and Afghanistan. There were many voices within the military who advocated for the development of the military's own in-house cultural training and cultural knowledge capacities in order to equip soldiers and military personnel themselves with the requisite knowledge base and cross-cultural competencies needed to operate within this new, culturally sensitive, counterinsurgency paradigm. However, the intellectual architects of HTS were sceptical that such functions could be fulfilled by soldiers and personnel operating within the structure and epistemological frame of the military. HTS was informed by the belief that in order to collect, analyse, refine and apply *accurate* socio-cultural knowledge of the adversary and host population in the conduct of a counterinsurgency in a non-Western setting, it was necessary to deploy academic experts with the requisite skills, knowledge base and grounding in social scientific method (McFate 2005a, 2005b). It was this placement of the figure of the expert in the field that was the central distinguishing characteristic of the HTS approach. While there has been extensive critical engagement with various aspects of the project, scant attention has been given to the reflections of the academics who served with Human

Terrain Teams in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps the most significant source of such reflections is Montgomery McFate and Janice Laurence's 2015 edited collection 'Social Science Goes to War'. The editors suggest that writing on the topic of HTS 'has suffered from a dearth of appropriate source material' and this collection seeks to remedy this by providing accounts of the project from 'individuals who served on teams downrange.' (McFate & Laurence 2015:38). It was intended to provide an overview of the programme, examine case studies of actual research in the field, and engage with the various ethical and organisational issues that arose during the project. However, as the editors explain:

> most importantly, this book aims to capture some of the diverse lived experiences of HTS members during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the overall context in which this took place. In the long run, it is the experiences of military and civilian personnel on the ground in theatre that will provide the bedrock for future analysis, evaluation and judgement of the program (McFate & Laurence 2015:41).

This chapter will critically examine the lived experience of the researchers as described in these reflections. In many cases, the papers are in direct response to criticisms of HTS as articulated by anthropologists such as David Price and Robert Gonzalez, and the findings of the American Anthropological Association's CEAUSSIC commission final report. As such, the testimonies frequently focus upon issues of informed consent, the possibility of use in lethal targeting, the classification of research output and debates around the relationship between HTS and intelligence functions. Similarly, the researchers are also concerned with engaging with critiques of the program from within military circles, including issues around recruitment, training, the problems embedding social scientists in military units, the difficulty of conducting research, the relationship between HTS and existing civilian and intelligence functions etc. This chapter does not intend to evaluate the contributions that are made to these debates, but will instead interrogate issues these reflections raise in terms of the positioning of the researcher as a subject, the relationship between researchers and the researched, and the self-representations of academics participating in HTS.

To do this, the chapter will proceed as follows; the first section will examine the extent to which the reflections of HTT members demonstrate a commitment to the epistemological veracity of knowledge produced through social scientific research. According to this view, social scientists – with their specific expertise and methodological

training – have a unique and privileged ability to overcome the limitations of ethnocentric bias to produce accurate and verifiable socio-cultural knowledge of enemy and host populations. While this appears suggestive of a purely positivistic praxis, the next section will examine the introduction of the distinction between etic and emic cultural knowledge; for some HTT members, the unique value of social science lay not in the ability to provide detached, objective truths regarding culture and society, but rather to facilitate a subjective knowing of the Other which would capture their realities 'in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful by members of the culture under study' (Morrison 2006:53). The following section will explore the self-conceptualization of HTT members as the 'voices of the voiceless'. This will critically examine their propensity to represent themselves as passionate advocates for the local population, who – through the conduct of their research – represent the wants, desires and needs of local people so as to effectively give them a seat at the table in the military decision-making process. Next, we will consider observations regarding the significance of conducting social research while armed, and how this relates to the ability of subjects to provide voluntary, informed consent for participation. The remaining sections will deal with the frequent allusions of HTT members to the need to be operationally relevant and useful to the military, the type of knowledge produced through the research process and for whom it is produced, and the role of HTTs as arbiters of authenticity. The chapter will then conclude with a brief exploration of researcher's self-representations in terms of the figure of the swashbuckling Orientalist adventurer.

4.2 The Veracity of Social Scientific Knowledge.

Arguments proclaiming the unique ability of social scientific experts to produce accurate, verifiable cultural knowledge were foundational to the establishment of HTS. These arguments were most vociferously outlined by the program's primary intellectual architect, anthropologist Montgomery McFate. McFate suggested that the absence of accurate cultural knowledge of adversary/host culture was disastrous in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations, and that the application of inaccurate or incomplete knowledge was equally as dangerous (Dunne 2013). According to McFate, military personnel and organisations are incapable of transcending inherent ethnocentric bias when it comes to knowing the adversary on a cultural level. (McFate 2010:198) This bias invariably leads to stereotyping, dehumanization and objectification of the enemy. While this may have served an instrumentally important historical function in many conflicts insofar as it 'made killing easier,' it is not useful in a counterinsurgency situation in which

it is essential to 'understand the insurgent's motivations.' (McFate 2010:199) McFate suggests that ethnocentrism prohibits the development of a cultural knowledge function within the military itself, and instead it is necessary to deploy academic experts with the requisite skills, methodological frameworks, and research ability to produce truly *accurate* cultural knowledge of the enemy (Dunne 2013).

The commitment to the role of the expert in the production of accurate cultural knowledge, and in particular the centrality of social scientific methodology to this, is echoed throughout the reflections of the social scientists who served on HTTs in Iraq and Afghanistan. This sentiment is captured succinctly by Brian G. Brereton, an anthropologist deployed in Afghanistan's eastern provinces of Wardak and Logar between 2009 and 2010. Brereton directly cites McFate in suggesting that 'military commanders, generally unfamiliar with ethnographic methodologies, are often left with "inadequate - and sometimes wrong – information' (Brereton 2015:268). He engages with the work of US army Lieutenant Colonel Jack Marr (Marr et al 2008) to demonstrate how:

> military units who decide to conduct their own social science research often stumble along, making serious yet basic research mistakes. (Brereton 2015:268)

Prior to the establishment of HTS, Marr and his unit identified the urgent need for socio-cultural information while on deployment in Iraq. He instructed his unit to focus upon collecting ethnographic information relating to the population in the area of operation, and they proceeded to collect this information during 'intelligence driven raids, cordon and searches, and attacks' (Brereton 2015:268). The process involved questioning as many 'military aged males as possible to get answers to these socio-cultural information requirements and Brereton relates how the information gleaned would then be 'analyzed in a census-like compilation of data' (Brereton 2015:268). Whilst praising Marr's intentions, and indeed his recognition of the need for cultural knowledge in the field, Brereton points out that the reliability of any cultural knowledge derived from Marr's ad-hoc field research is undermined by its 'glaring methodological problems' (2015:269). He criticises the coercive nature of the information collection, its combination with lethal operations, the complete absence of sampling or research methods, and the lack of questionnaire or iterative design process (Brereton 2015:269). According to Brereton, this example of an improvised attempt to collect socio-cultural knowledge in the field is

demonstrative of 'the enormous need for social science methodology among US military units determined to conduct socio-cultural research' (2015:269). He suggests these are problems that 'an anthropologist could easily formulate solutions to' which could have 'drastically improved the reliability of the socio-cultural information collected' (Brereton 2015:269).

The emphasis upon the centrality of the social scientific method to the collection of accurate socio-cultural information is pervasive throughout the reflections of former HTT members on their time in the field. James Dorough-Lewis, for example, argues explicitly that:

> Generation after generation of social scientists have been developing methods for elucidating the relationships that characterize social systems, and it is in everybody's best interests for the military to have access to the wisdom of that legacy (2015:193).

Similarly, in contrasting the approach of HTTs with existing civilian functions such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams [PRTs] and District Support Teams [DSTs], Leslie Adrienne Payne observes that what differentiates HTS as a social science project is the fact that in the conduct of fieldwork their 'research methods had to be scientific and credible, with empirical data supporting [their] claims' (2015:229). While initially HTS was conceived as a project for embedding anthropologists, in practice academics from a wide variety of social science backgrounds were employed as HTT members. As a result, the variance in disciplinary background influenced the methodological approaches taken by different researchers in the field. McFate and Laurence claim that there was at least some degree of standardisation in these various approaches to research. They suggest that:

> Depending on the research question, a research design generally would be developed including testable hypotheses, assumptions, research methods, and some preliminary idea about the form of the final product. The research would then be conducted in the field with secondary source supplementation (MCFate and Laurence 2015:15).

Based upon the testimonies of HTT members, the extent to which this idealised approach to research design was reflected in practices in the field is questionable at best. Varying levels of qualification and ability, relationships with military units, and the exigencies of conducting research in a war zone often led to research that was reactive and ad-hoc, and far from meticulous in design or execution.

At its core, HTS is rooted in a commitment to the veracity of knowledge produced through academic knowledge and rigorous social scientific method. Within this frame, the truth about the culture of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan can only be revealed through the figure of the Western expert and the conceptual tools at their disposal. Edward Said identified the 1798 French Invasion of Egypt as the key moment in the emergence of the discursive project of Orientalism, and suggests it was an 'invasion which was in many ways the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one' (Said 2003:42). The significance of this emphasis on the veracity of knowledge produced through research will be theorized in later chapters. For the time being it is sufficient to note that, despite the rhetorical commitment that is made to a cultural relativist framework, this encounter is not one between two equally valid, yet divergent cultural particularisms. Rather, it represents an encounter of deeply uneven power relations in which Western universalism meets a subordinated, cultural Other. On one side of the equation is a culture which needs to be known, while on the other side is a universal reason which has the monopoly on the methodology and the tools needed to truly know anything at all. On the surface, the epistemological assumptions of HTS appear to ascribe to a purely positivistic conception of the production of a scientific, empirical knowing of the Other for the purposes of domination. But, as the next section will explore, for some at least, the real value of social scientific method lies not in the mastery of objective knowledge, but its capacity for knowing the Other in the way that they know themselves.

4.3 Translating Meaning: etic/emic distinctions.

According to Montgomery McFate, 'one of the central epistemological tenets of anthropology is cultural relativism – understanding societies within their own framework' (2005a:26). The suggestion that anthropology was not simply capable of producing objective knowledge about other cultures, but rather is able to understand them in the way that they understand themselves, was a key argument for the weaponization of the discipline and social science more broadly. One of the most lucid explications of this

perspective can be found in the reflections of James Dorough-Lewis Jr. in his chapter 'Investing in Uncertainty: applying social science in military operations' (2015). Dorough-Lewis was a former Army human intelligence [HUMINT] officer with an academic background who had served a tour in Iraq before returning in 2009 as a civilian social scientist with HTS. The chapter is primarily concerned with using his experiences to explore the differences and intersections between intelligence functions and applied social science in the field. Opponents of HTS have characterised the program as a form of applied military intelligence, while its leadership and participating academics have consistently denied this claim. Dorough-Lewis explains that one of the key mantras during the HTS training cycle at Fort Leavenworth was 'we do not do intelligence' (2015:189). However, he goes on to suggest that the reality of the situation was more complicated, and describes the many ways in which HTTs mirrored the traditional intelligence functions. The crux of his argument is that in order to add value, social science needs to avoid mimicking the military's ways of doing business, and instead focus upon how it can add value through an emphasis on its own 'unique voice and vision' (2015:193). He contends that:

> social science does something unique from any other activity in the military or intelligence system, and relies on a set of assumptions that may seem foreign - or even fanciful – to military or intelligence professionals. Ontologically, an effective social science capacity operates from the assumption that reality is multiple and subjective. Epistemologically, effective social scientists seek to dismantle the barriers between themselves and their subjects and represent their subjects' interpretations' (Dorough-Lewis 2015:192).

Within this frame, HUMINT is conceived of as a fundamentally positivist exercise whereby the operator seeks to extract objective facts contained within the mind of the source, in contrast to information gleaned from social scientific research which Dorough-Lewis suggests is the result of a process of co-production between collector and source (2015:196/197).

For Dorough-Lewis, the value of social science lies in its capacity to understand variation of meaning, and this can be best understood with reference to the distinction between etic and emic approaches to knowledge. According to Charles R. Morrison, an instructor at the TRADOC culture centre at Fort Hauchuca, Arizona, this distinction can

be traced to the field of linguistics in the 1950s, and the concept 'has been extended to methodological theory explaining native versus scientific analyses of other cultural phenomena, particularly analysis by cultural anthropologists influenced by Marvin Harris' (Morrison 2006:52). He points to practical definitions of the Harrisian sense of the terms put forward by anthropologist James Lett. Etic constructs, according to Lett, are:

> accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers. An etic construct is correctly termed "etic" if, and only if, it is in accord with the epistemological principles deemed appropriate by science (i.e., etic constructs should be precise, logical comprehensive, replicable, falsifiable, and observer independent) (Lett 1996:383, Morrison 2006:53).

In contrast to this notion of etic knowledge as objective, scientific, knowing from the outside, Lett describes emic constructs as:

> accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by members of the culture under study. An emic construct is correctly termed "emic" if, and only if, it is in accord with the perceptions and understandings deemed appropriate by the insider's culture. The validation of emic knowledge (epistemology) thus becomes a matter of consensus—namely the consensus of native informants (Lett 1996:383, Morrison 2006:53).

Unsurprisingly, Morrison reaches for the familiar figure of T.E Lawrence as typifying an emic approach to knowledge of a non-Western culture. He refers to Lawrence's 1926 essay *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as an attempt to represent the world view of the Bedouin from the inside, and suggests that in his attempt to render patterns of Arab behaviour intelligible to the Western reader, 'Lawrence tries to move beyond mere observation and get 'inside the mind' of Arabs' (Morrison 2006:52).

Grasping the etic/emic distinction is the vital part of Dorough-Lewis' arguments for the necessity of the social-scientific expert. Unlike McFate and others, he does not accept that the military lacks the organisational capacity to produce etic knowledge. He suggests that the military, and military intelligence in particular, is familiar and comfortable with the etic, and has 'no problem wrapping its head around etic categories, regardless of how they are constructed' (Dorough-Lewis 2015:208). However, he goes on to argue that:

> no fully incorporated army element has the responsibility for including emic data into the pool of information and for making it digestible to commanders on the ground using a substantive, mindful and coherent methodology (Dorough-Lewis 2015:207).

The ability to capture the emic is the unique preserve of the social scientist, and Dorough-Lewis describes how his HTT adopted a methodological approach which involved the division of human experience into a taxonomy of etic categories; these categories provided a point of departure for all analysis, but alone they would not offer anything the military could not develop independently of a dedicated social science function. The key lay in the second stage of the process, whereby the HTT would cross reference these etic categories with emic data so that the lived experience of the local population could be represented in military decision-making (Dorough-Lewis 2015:208). The HTT assumed the responsibility:

> for representing the population's perspectives of its own context. How did they view themselves? How did they view us? And how did they view the others around them? We adapted this three-pronged emic approach to cross referencing our etic categories from the first, second and third person categories used in many languages to define a comprehensive representational system of experience (Dorough-Lewis 2015:208).

4.4 The Voices of the Voiceless

Dorough-Lewis' claim that his HTT were producing knowledge with a view to representing the lived experience of the local population in the military decision-making

process is typical of the way in which HTS members conceptualised their position in relation to the subjects of their research, and indeed, justified their participation in the programme in the first instance. In a study of ten former HTT members, anthropologists Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban and George Lucas asked participants to disclose their motivations for joining; all 7 respondents to the question suggested that their primary motive was the reduction of harm or 'doing some good' (Fluehr-Lobban & Lucas 2015:250). Interestingly, these benevolent motivations are the only responses the authors deem worthy of discussion in the main body of the text, while additional motivations including the generous financial rewards, possibilities for career advancement, patriotism etc. are relegated to a footnote. The assumption that the production of accurate cultural knowledge will invariably lead to a reduction of harm and the use of kinetic force is ubiquitous throughout the discourses of HTS; perhaps more significantly here, the study suggests that:

> Serving as cultural advisors gave practitioners a sense of serving both military commanders and Iraqi or Afghan people (Fluehr-Lobban & Lucas 2015:250).

Representations of social scientists as self-appointed advocates for the local population are pervasive in the reflections of HTT members on their time in the field. In one instance McFate cites an email from an anonymous social scientist in which they pronounce:

> We are the people who are dedicated to making a difference in a combat zone not only by hopefully saving lives but also by advocating for the populace non-kinetically (McFate 2015:33).

There is a sense in which participation in the program is conceived as something akin to a particularly dangerous form of voluntourism; the social scientist is imbued with a benevolent, altruistic disposition dedicated to the cause of the subjects of their research at great risk to their own safety. This sentiment is captured excellently by Brian Brereton when quoting one of his HTT colleagues expressing their satisfaction with the job:

> I really enjoy this job because we always get to be the good guy. Whenever we talk in the brigade or the battalion meetings, we always get to stick up for the local population (Brereton 2015:276).

Similarly, in discussing her experience with HTT teams in Helmand Provence, Leslie Payne ponders whether the sheer extent to which she was concerned with trying to 'communicate the peoples' needs and desires' had perhaps gone too far. Ultimately, she asks:

> Did we push too hard? As field researchers, was our job merely to learn about the community and report the results, and not to become passionate advocates during the process? (Payne 2015:234).

One thing is clear, HTT members did indeed represent themselves as passionate advocates, who – through their research – were giving voices to the voiceless.

While the provision of accurate socio-cultural knowledge with a view to aiding and improving the military decision-making process was the basic raison d'etre of HTS, ideas around the provision of emic knowledge and representing the lived experience of local populations in their own terms signify an expansion of the scope of the role of social scientists. The substance of this argument is captured by Ted Callaghan when he comments:

> I also thought that the HTS could help not just the US military, but the Afghans caught in the middle of the conflict as well, by giving them a proxy voice in the decision-making process (Callaghan 2015:96).

The implications of this comment are significant; it posits a situation whereby military decision-making should not merely adopt a cultural sensitivity toward the local population, but rather, should include them in the decision-making process itself. This suggests a radical reconceptualization of both the role of the social scientist, and the relationship between the military and the local population, that cuts to the core of the logic of counterinsurgency itself. Embedded social scientists are represented as the "proxy-voice" of the local population, who, through the conduct of social research in the field, are tasked with divining the needs, wants, and desires of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan so as to represent their interests in the military decision-making process: in effect, giving them a seat at the table. For Dorough-Lewis, this was not only desirable

from an altruistic standpoint, but rather played an essential role in the reconfiguration of the relations between Coalition Forces and the local population which was necessary for the success in defeating the insurgency. He argues that:

> if the etic categories were cross-referenced with emic data, then the meaning behind the lived experiences of the local population, which constitutes the center of gravity in a counterinsurgency environment, could be represented in a way that informs the military decision-making process while respecting the intentions of the population. **This in turn could facilitate the military's redefining of the term "we" as one encompassing the military and the population, while marginalizing spoilers** (Dorough-Lewis 2015:208 emphasis added).

The significance of this argument cannot be overstated; through the proxy representation of the local population in the military-decision making process, Dorough-Lewis believes that the fundamental material relations between the local population and the occupying military force could be reconstituted so as to position them on the same side of a conflict against "spoilers." This fits closely with the wider discursive processes of the cultural turn through which the United States sought to disavow their role as the invading force which initiated the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and reposition themselves as benevolent, peaceful arbiters of identity based regional conflicts. This self-conceptualization of the researcher as the proxy representative of the local people is highly problematic, both from an epistemological standpoint, and with regards to its basic conceptualization of the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of the research.

The reflections of HTT members demonstrate a commitment to the notion that social scientists were uniquely positioned to unearth, interpret and thus represent the genuine will of the local people. James Dorough-Lewis provides a perfect illustration of this logic when he recalls a situation whereby the Army were having difficulty providing adequate healthcare for women in a Sunni area in Iraq. In response to issues women were facing accessing healthcare, the army conducted an assessment and selected an appropriate hospital and supplied it with the appropriate level of equipment and funding to meet the projecting demands of the area (Dorough-Lewis 2015:196). They also ensured the security of the area so as to enable access to the hospital. Despite this, the reports of issues with access to healthcare for women in the area persisted, and in an effort to discover why, they solicited a HTT to engage with the local women. Dorough-

Lewis explains that their research revealed that accessing the hospital in question required local women to travel through a particular area where many of their family members had lost their lives. Although the area appeared secure and safe for travel, the personal and community trauma associated with loss was leading to women neglecting health issues rather than travelling to the hospital. Dorough-Lewis argues that:

> Had HTS not built relationships of trust with those women, and represented the women's alternative meanings of security with fidelity as well as in a manner digestible to the unit's military decision-making process, then the unit would not have been able to make sound decisions that in the end moved towards meeting the interests of the women, the community and the unit (2015:196).

The two dimensions of this argument are equally significant; firstly, the idea that researchers are uniquely positioned to establish a relationship of trust with local subjects, and secondly, that these relationships, in tandem with the application of their social scientific expertise, enable them to represent the alternative meanings of the locals with fidelity. The word fidelity performs a dual role here insofar as it simultaneously describes a relation of loyalty and allegiance to those being researched, whilst also implying accuracy and precision in the presentation of their reality. Reflections of HTT members are littered with examples whereby the conclusions reached through the conduct of research are presented as uniquely representative of the desires and interests of the subjects of research. Just one such example can be seen in Leslie Payne recounting of the conflict between her HTT and British District Support Teams [DST] in the Sangin district of Helmand Province in Afghanistan. The case will be examined further in a forthcoming section of this chapter, but the distinction Payne posits between the approaches of her HTT and the DST is highly instructive; Payne argues that the British DST, and indeed Provincial Reconstruction Teams [PRTs] operating in the area were attempting to reconstruct the political infrastructure without adequately accounting for the needs and desires of locals at the grassroots level. She argues that these teams engaged only with government officials and local elites when attempting to identify potential leaders for the region, and in doing so failed to engage in the type of field research necessary to divine the desires of the wider local population. She argues that:

> By contrast, such fieldwork was the mainstay of HTTs, and our research methods had to be scientific and credible, with empirical data

> supporting our claims. We wanted to be correct in our assessments and be able to brief the marines with confidence and credibility (Payne 2015:229).

For most HTT members, the knowledge produced through their research process was uniquely representative on the will of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The issues with these self-understandings are multitudinous; the unproblematic depiction of researchers employed as military subcontractors as benevolent advocates for the interests of their research subjects stretches the bounds of credulity. There is a complete failure to acknowledge or engage with the nature of the power relations in the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of their research; in particular there is an almost complete absence of any attempt to reflexively account for the positionality of the researcher and its effect upon the research process, or indeed contextualize their role in relation to well-established complicity of academic research in various past-projects of Western colonial expansion. But perhaps the most significant of all these issues is the foundational epistemological assumption that it is not only possible, but is in fact the unique preserve of social scientists, to access, analyze, translate and represent the truths and realities of marginalized non-Western research subjects. Despite being explicitly billed as the researchers' own reflections upon the conduct of social science in a war zone, McFate's edited collection contains virtually no theoretical interrogation of any of these issues. The closest the contributors get to substantive engagement comes from James Dorough-Lewis in his description of the contrast between the approaches of human intelligence and social scientists; Dorough-Lewis suggests that the distinction between the two can largely be understood in terms of the line between positivist and anti-positivist epistemological approaches to knowledge production. He comments:

> Another key distinction between my perspectives as a human intelligence collector and those as a social scientist regards the nature of information. For a HUMINTer, information resides in the mind of the source. It is the task of the HUMINT collector to tease that information into the lights so that an intelligence analyst may process that "intelligence information" into fully evaluated intelligence…As a social scientist, I recognized instead that the information was a co-production between the collector and the source (Dorough-Lewis 2015:196).

Unfortunately, this basic and rather superficial acknowledgment of research as a process of co-production is as far as Dorough-Lewis goes. There is no attempt to further interrogate this process of co-production, the nature of the power relations at play or the extent to which the knowledge produced is representative of the particular 'truth' or 'reality' of the subjects of the research.

This fails to acknowledge decades of critical scholarship across a range of academic disciplines - including feminist theory, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, cultural-studies, and indeed anthropology itself – engaging with what George Marcus and Michael Fischer have termed 'the crisis of representation in the social sciences' (Marcus and Fischer 1996). This crisis – more accurately *crises* – of representation refers to a myriad of different lines of inquiry which brought into question the ability of the social sciences to adequately describe social reality. These crises broadly arose from 'the (noncontroversial) claim that no interpretive account can ever directly or completely capture lived experience' (Schwandt 2007:48). A comprehensive account of these crises is both unnecessary and impracticable at this juncture, but it is worthwhile to briefly introduce a number of salient dimensions of these critiques as they relate to the issues outlined in the previous paragraphs. In a 1996 journal article, feminist scholar Liz Stanley provides an overview of existing theoretical debates regarding the relationship between feminism, research and representation. Stanley asserts that to claim to represent the lives of others through research involves an assertion of power on behalf of the researcher. She suggests that one major feminist approach to understanding this involves:

> Recognition of (moral, ethical, political) issues concerning power in the research and writing process, in particular the power of the researcher through (often unacknowledged) knowledge-claims that written research both can and should represent the realities of other people (Stanley 1996: 45).

While these issues of power are omnipresent in the conduct of field research, and in particular with research involving marginalized, subjugated and vulnerable populations, they take on even greater significance in the context of Western military occupations in the Middle East in places which have suffered greatly under previous historical European colonial occupation. Within this frame the entire concept of research carries with it the weight of its past historical role. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains that:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary… The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples… it is surely difficult to discuss research methodology and indigenous peoples together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices (2008:1-2).

The reflections of HTT members contain the occasional brief acknowledgment of the relationship between research and past colonial enterprises. In one such instance Ted Callaghan comments:

> Perhaps uniquely, anthropologists have an uneasy relationship with the origins of their discipline, a sort of persistent, hand wringing guilt over its colonial beginnings. Many early anthropologists manipulated their relationship as colonizer to gain access to their colonized subjects, who didn’t have much say in the matter, and their findings were utilized by colonial administrators (Callaghan 2015:97).

However, despite these acknowledgments, there is an almost willful ignorance of the obvious comparisons between the practices of these ‘early anthropologists’ and the practices of HTS. There is an underlying assumption that this relationship between colonial domination and research, and the problematic power relations which arose from it, bears no comparison to the type of benevolent advocacy which HTT members perceived themselves to be engaged in. Linda Tuhiwai Smith again saliently observes that:

> Many researchers, academics and project workers may see the benefits of their particular research projects as serving a greater good

> 'for mankind', or serving a specific emancipatory goal for an oppressed community. But belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of ideology as it is of academic training. It becomes so taken for granted that many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities (2008:2).

4.5 Informed Consent

Perhaps the closest former HTT members come to reflexive engagement with the nature of the relationship between researchers and their research subjects is in the discussion of ethical issues around informed consent, and in particular, the implications of obtaining voluntary consent whilst conducting research in the company of heavily armed military units. This discussion arose in direct conversation with criticisms of HTS from within the academy in the United States – in particular, the final report of the American Anthropological Association's Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities' [CEAUSSIC] examination of the project. One of the central conclusions of the report argued that:

> HTS anthropologists work in a war zone under conditions that make it difficult for those they communicate with to give "informed consent" without coercion, or for this consent to be taken at face value or freely refused. As a result, "voluntary informed consent" (as stipulated by the AAA Code of Ethics, section III, A, 4) is compromised (CEAUSSIC 2009:70).

Civilian HTS contractors, whilst not mandated to, were given the option to carry weapons while engaged in research in the field. There is only once instance in the data collated for this research where a researcher expresses their reservations about the potentially deleterious effects of the presence of weapons during the conduct of their research. Jennifer Clark describes the challenges she faced in the field while embedded with a Special Forces unit in the Sinjar region of Northern Iraq. She recalls that:

> They kept asking us if we wanted weapons, but we declined. There was no reason for us to have weapons. Especially when talking to locals. In fact, I made it clear that I'd prefer that they stay as far away from us as possible while I Interviewed. Unlike the Marines, the ODA stayed easily 15 feet away from me at all times while I talked with people and many times I entered gated compounds while they stayed on the street (Clark 2015:160).

Clark clearly shared the concerns of critics regarding the presence of weapons and the proximity of military units when conducting interviews. In another instance she describes disregarding a day of interviews when she believed the respondents had been coerced and pressured into participating:

> We had a faulty interpreter who I realized had been threatening to the interviewees, and the Marines themselves had potentially created some bias due to their extremely close proximity to me and my colleague during interviews… Therefore, I could in no way guarantee that the Iraqis felt safe in talking with me. Overall I noted my fear in my notes and pulled the data from my sample (Clark 2015:156).

Clark's misgivings regarding HTT members carrying weapons and the potential influence of the proximity of military units upon the ability of respondents to willingly consent were not widely shared by other social scientists writing about their experiences. Leslie Adrienne Payne describes how her experience in the field in Sangin, Helmund Province quickly made her aware that carrying a weapon was in fact "mandatory' for social scientists, regardless of what the rules stated (Payne 2015:220). Somewhat ironically, the common defense that emerges against the idea that the presence of weapons undermines the integrity of the research process suggests that such critiques arise from precisely the kind of cultural misunderstandings that HTS sought to remedy. This position is exemplified by Ted Callaghan when he comments:

> **There was a fair bit of ethical controversy in academic circles about civilian researchers being armed. Carrying guns, the thinking went, would coerce Afghans into talking to us, thus making "voluntary consent" impossible. Obviously, none of these**

> **people had ever been to Afghanistan, since the last thing that is going to intimidate and Afghan – especially a Pashtun male – is a gun.** The few times I went out unarmed, the Afghans I interviewed invariably asked where my weapon was and, upon being told that I didn't need any since I was their guest, informed me that I was stark raving mad (Callaghan 2015:106 emphasis added).

Fleuhr-Loban and Lucas quote an interview with a former CIA employee in which he suggests that informed consent was possible despite the presence of the military because 'the presence of weapons is so normal' (Fleuhr-Loban & Lucas 2015:252). The logic of this defense is clear: critics who argue that it is impossible to obtain voluntary, informed consent at the barrel of a gun are guilty of projecting Western sensibilities onto people who have fundamentally different attitudes towards the presence of weapons, and indeed violence itself. This is particularly pervasive in representations of Afghanistan, where conflict is presented as an endemic and natural element of culture to the extent that ordinary Afghans would be completely unperturbed by the presence of heavily armed military personnel. Brian Brereton explains:

> Critics of HTS maintain that interviewees surrounded by armed personnel are not free to decide for themselves if they want to participate in a study. Yet I found that the majority of Afghans – after decades of conflict – are comfortable expressing divergent opinions or staying silent around groups of armed men (Brereton 2015:273).

These rationalisations closely echo the logic of long-established rhetorical justifications for brutal colonial violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, whereby the deaths of indigenous peoples were defended on the basis that the people themselves placed a much lower value on life than their European conquerors. Historian Priya Satia provides a brilliant explication of this logic in the development of the British imperial policing strategy of "air control" in the period between the two world wars (Satia 2006). In Iraq in particular, the "air control" policy involved the deployment of the Royal Air Force in a brutal campaign of aerial bombardment of villages and tribes in order to suppress unrest and subversive activities. The campaign 'proved horrifically costly in Iraqi lives', however the British Air Ministry defended the elision 'of the distinction between combatants and civilians' on the basis that '[a]ll war is not only brutal, but indiscriminate in its brutality' (Satia 2006:35-36). However, Satia also explores more sophisticated defenses of the

morality of slaughtering innocents proffered by British officials. RAF intelligence officer John Glubb argued death in violent conflict was a routine aspect of Bedouin cultural life. Satia summarizes Glubb's position as follows:

> To Bedouin, war was a "romantic excitement" whose production of "tragedies, bereavements, widows and orphans" was a "normal way of life", "natural and inevitable"…It would almost be a cultural offense *not* to bombard them with all the might of the empire (Satia 2006:37).

Elsewhere Satia cites the explanation of another senior British military figure as to why the 'innocent deaths caused by the bombardment need not trouble the British conscience' (Satia 2008:2). She describes how:

> Just after leaving his post as Chief of Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard leaned on the expertise of Glubb, Lawrence (an RAF recruit himself), and others as he assured Parliament in 1930, "these tribes love fighting for fighting's sake… **They have no objection to being killed**" (Satia 2008:2 emphasis added).

Similar moral gymnastics regarding civilian casualties can also be observed in more contemporaneous military discourses on Iraq. One such example is an argument put forward by Frederick Kagan – a civilian special adviser to General Petraeus – in defense of the devastation wrought upon Iraqi cities in the mid-2000s. Perhaps the most egregious example of this was the Second Battle of Fallujah in November/December 2004, which would turn out to be the bloodiest battle of the war. In a bid to oust Iraqi insurgents, US Forces left the city flattened by intense shelling, which included widespread use of white phosphorus shells (Buncombe & Hughes 2005). The scenes of devastation in the aftermath of the battle provoked considerable controversy in the United States, however Kagan argues that, once again, this reflected a lack of appreciation for the particularities of Iraqi culture. He argues:

> Coalition forces fought their way through Iraqi cities and villages, sometimes doing fearful damage to the cities and local populations. We devastated Fallujah and Ramadi, for example. But local grievances did not focus on the collateral damage. Considering the scale of the

> destruction, Iraqi complaints about it were very mild… Iraqis generally recognize that their wars are fought in cities, horrible though that is, so they have a fairly high tolerance for collateral damage and even for the presence of foreign forces in their urban areas and villages (Kagan 2004).

The logical parallels between these arguments and the defenses of social science at the barrel of a gun are clear: they are predicated on the notion that non-Western people have a fundamentally different cultural relationship to violence such that they were effectively immune to coercion. In the minds of HTT members this enabled local populations to give willful, informed and voluntary consent to participate in their research even when confronted by heavily armed military units, and indeed, armed social scientists. This is fully consistent with colonial juxtapositions of the civilized Westerner with the figure of the violent, culture-bound native, for whom violence was such a natural part of life that they really would have 'no objection to being killed'.

4.6 Operational Relevance

Previous sections have explored the significant epistemological and conceptual issues with problematic self-representations as advocates for the local population, who – by faithfully depicting their reality through research – sought to provide the locals with a seat at the table in the military decision-making process. This ignored decades of critical engagement with issues of representation in social research, involved no attempt to interrogate issues of power which arise in the relationships between researchers and research subjects, and perhaps most significantly, turned a blind eye to the historical role of research and Western researchers in facilitating projects of colonial expansion and domination. The claims become even more incredible when considered in the context of the self-stated aims and objectives of HTS, the nature of its research output and its intended audience, and the language used throughout HTT members' reflections describing the various 'stakeholders' in the research process. HTS was established for the express purpose of supporting the US military in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations. While this may have been couched in the language of aid, the central goal of the program was to provide the military with local cultural knowledge so as to better facilitate the achievement of military objectives. This is made explicitly clear in the Joint

Urgent Operational Needs Statement [JUONs] document which set out the mission of HTS as being to:

> enable culturally astute decision-making, enhance operational effectiveness, and preserve and share socio-cultural institutional knowledge (McFate 2015:9).

Throughout her writing on the project, Montgomery McFate consistently describes the express purpose of the project as the provision of accurate cultural knowledge to the military with a view to improving operational effectiveness and remedying what she perceived to be critical gaps in the military's counterinsurgency capabilities. She comments:

> Surely military organizations require socio-cultural knowledge of both their adversaries and their allies, but must also understand the population in the area where they are conducting operations. This type of knowledge is especially critical in irregular warfare, such as counterinsurgency and stability operations, where the local population are not just bystanders but the center of gravity (McFate 2005:1-2).

What mattered was not the extent to which social scientific knowledge could be deployed to represent the interests of the local population, but rather, how such knowledge could be instrumentalized for the purposes of the US military.

This instrumentality is succinctly captured by James Dorough-Lewis when he observes:

> Effective counterinsurgency was not about winning on the battlefield as much as it was about seizing the premise of the battlefield itself, and reshaping it into an environment that deterred insurgent forces. Doing so required an intimate understanding of the interests of local populations, the distribution of power within them, and the ever-evolving indigenous social mechanisms in place. Because culture constitutes the meaning-making force constructing the multiple,

> overlapping and even mutually exclusive realities of the battlefield itself, without an ability to incorporate culture as a key decision-making factor, the military was at a loss… the military as an institution began to realize the importance of cultural knowledge in fulfilling the goals of counterterrorism, stability and humanitarian operations (Dorough-Lewis 2015:188).

The implications of this are clear; the impulse to obtain an 'intimate understanding of the interests of local populations' was not driven by a benevolent desire to fight their corner, but rather, was only important insofar as it contributed to 'reshaping the battlefield' into an environment that 'deterred insurgent forces' and facilitated the achievement of military goals. Leslie Payne's criticism of the approach of British District Support teams briefly considered earlier in this chapter is particularly instructive in this regard. Payne criticized the approach of British DSTs to their work in Basrah, arguing that they privileged kinetic operations and warfighting whilst ignoring the value of grassroots and population centric, grassroots research (Payne 2015:215). In typical fashion, Payne argued that the type of research her HTT was engaged in was exactly what was needed to pay real account to 'what the people of Basrah actually wanted' (Payne 2015:215). She argues:

> We produced an ethnographic study on Al-Hayyaniyah that provided an analysis on the impact of the internally displaced persons, local expectations of government officials, and parallels between Sadr city and Al-Hayyiniyah, and so on. **It was the type of robust population study that could probably have helped the British in their struggle to control and hold southern Iraq (**Payne 2015:215 emphasis added).

The final sentence cuts to the core of the issue; cultural knowledge was important, not because representing the realities of local populations would advance their interests, but only insofar as it contributed to their control and pacification. This approach, popularly represented in the West as the strategy to 'win hearts and minds', was akin to a sort of warfighting through public relations. The goal was to rehabilitate the image of US and coalition forces so as to undermine support for insurgency, and to reposition them as liberators in the eyes of the locals. Payne goes on to describe how the British repeated the same mistakes in Afghanistan's Helmund Province. She quotes Frank Ledwidge, a former British naval intelligence officer, who noted:

> Whether by luck or design, the Taliban had succeeded in diverting the British paratroops from what they saw as "counterinsurgency" to fighting a high intensity battle, destroying and depopulating town centres. In so doing, the British had fulfilled exactly their historical role as most Helmandis saw it – that of aggressive and destructive invaders (Ledwidge 2011:88-89 in Payne 2015:219).

Far from the idea of research as a process of 'knowing the Other so as to represent them', in reality, the role of HTS would be far more accurately described as 'knowing with a view to co-option and pacification'.

The instrumental orientation of HTS is also evidenced by the pervasive allusions throughout HTT members' reflections to the need for social scientists to continuously and actively demonstrate their operational relevance and value to the units they are embedded with. Perhaps the most consistent theme which emerges in terms of 'lessons learned' for social scientists is the danger of being marginalized in situations where military personnel cannot recognize the potential of social scientific research to assist them in achieving military objectives. Jennifer Clark relays the initial difficulties her team faced in this regard:

> Our next step was to integrate within the unit and to advertise our expertise and skills in a clear and concise manner, so that the Marines would understand how to use our capability. It was not easy…We were labelled as "eggheads" and "eaters," euphemisms denoting useless contractors who drained base resources. We had to come up with quick sound bites that described our capabilities and skills, hoping to catch the attention of a decision-maker (Clark 2015:144).

There are innumerable examples of similar arguments which consistently emphasize the responsibility of social scientists to proactively demonstrate their worth to the military. Katherine Blue Carroll cites the example of a situation during her time in the Rashid district of Baghdad, where the army were dealing with the fallout from an incident in which an American soldier had shot a copy of the Qur'an. The army formulated a comprehensive response to the situation without consultation with the HTT. The

response, which included the issuing of talking points to soldiers along with instructions to apologize to Iraqis on the street, was appropriate according to Blue Carroll. However, she believed that she could use the incident to demonstrate the potential of her team. She suggested that although the military knew what to do, the HTT could help provide them with better understanding of why they were doing it, and so she set about researching the relationship between Muslims and the Qur'an and distributed her findings in a document to the brigade (Blue Carroll 2015). She concluded that:

> The lesson of the Qur'an shooting incident for me as an embedded social scientist was that even when you are not asked to do so, you must find a way to contribute. You want people to feel that something is missing if they have not heard from the HTT (Blue Carroll 2015:125).

Kathleen Reedy, in her piece entitled "The Four Pillars of Integration: how to make social science work in a war zone", provides an overview of the issues faced by HTTs which prevented them from effectively integrating with the military units with which they were embedded. In it she comments that:

> Far more common and difficult to fix are teams that are sidelined because neither they nor the host unit really knows what to do with them… In these instances, teams often chose or were assigned to focus on what I called "cultural fluff" – topics that were interesting but were not truly useful or operationally relevant. Topics like the aforementioned tribal studies were all too often put into this category if the HTT did not make an active effort to highlight how and why they were relevant to the daily lives of soldiers conducting counterinsurgency (Reedy 2015:178).

Perhaps the most vital element to demonstrating 'operational usefulness' was the manner in which information generated from HTS research was formatted and presented. This speaks to some of the central epistemological questions raised by the project – namely, what type of knowledge was produced through this research, and for whom was it produced.

4.7 Operational Knowledge: research for whom?

> I had my Army-issue waterproof green notebook out and was furiously writing down the conversation, as Rex translated it. Another man, older and with a vaguely philosophical air, observed, “In America, there must be vast libraries filled with those little notebooks. For eight years, every American who has come here has written down everything we said and then left, never to return” (Callahan 2015:104).

The excerpt above, taken from HTS member Ted Callaghan’s recollection of his time in the field in Afghanistan, succinctly captures the central epistemic relation at the heart of this research. While HTS members actively positioned themselves as advocates for the local population in Iraq and Afghanistan - conceptualizing their research as providing ‘voices to the voiceless’ - the knowledge produced was absolutely never intended to be presented or disseminated to the subjects of the research themselves. Consistent with the Orientalist underpinnings of the project, the Western expert set out to collect and classify knowledge of the cultural ‘Other’ for the purposes of translation for a specifically Western audience. Said asserts that:

> To be a European in the Orient *always* involves being a consciousness set apart from, and unequal with, its surroundings. But the main thing to note is the intention of this consciousness: What is the Orient for? ...**In all cases the Orient is *for* the European observer** (Said 2003:158 emphasis added).

This relation in the context of a distinctly martial Orientalism is perhaps best captured in Said’s description of the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 – a moment which Said describes as ‘the first really important modern imperial expedition’ (Jhally 1998). Said goes on to describe how Napoleon:

> invades the place, but he doesn’t invade it in the way the Spaniards invaded the new world – looking for loot. He comes instead with an enormous army of soldiers, but also scientists, botanists, architects, philologists, biologists, historians, whose job it was to record Egypt in

> every conceivable way and produce a sort of scientific survey of Egypt which was designed, not for the Egyptians, but for the Europeans (Jhally 1998).

The knowledge produced through the research of HTS exactly mirrors this orientation; throughout their recollections HTS social scientists repeatedly assert that their work is produced with the US military as their intended audience. Furthermore, they make frequent allusion to the need for research output to be presented in a manner that is intelligible to the military, and perhaps even more significantly, 'operationalizable.' While Callahan's anecdote regarding Americans writing down everything about the local population before leaving never to return says much about the inability of research subjects to access what has been written about them, the suggestion that the knowledge sits idly in vast libraries on the other side of the world fundamentally mischaracterizes its relationship to processes of domination. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith observes, the:

> collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified, and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized (2008:1).

So, while local populations may be denied easy access to research outputs, the knowledge produced through the research process is ultimately refracted back upon them through the discourse and practice of Western intervention. But while this is an important point to acknowledge, ultimately, the research of HTS – in line with Said's description of historical examples of martial Orientalism – was knowledge produced by Westerners, and very clearly intended for Western eyes.

From its inception, the HTS was designed to speak in language that was intelligible to a US military audience. In fact, this tendency was enshrined in the naming of the program itself. The term 'human terrain' is a controversial one, and its use has provoked significant criticism from anthropologists such as Roberto Gonzalez who cautioned against its 'objectifying and dehumanizing effects' (Gonzalez 2008:23). In rejecting this criticism, McFate and Lawrence argue that the term was appropriate precisely because of the necessity for the HTS to speak to the US military in its own terms. They contend that:

> In choosing the term “human terrain”, HTS program management was considering how best to communicate to the military land forces the fundamental idea of the program: that the local population should be considered as a critical element of the operational environment in the same way as weather, geographical terrain or time are evaluated**. In order to be adopted and used by the military, social science concepts must be translated into terminology familiar to a military audience…** “Human Terrain,” rather than being a means to dehumanize civilian populations (as some anthropological critics of HTS have asserted), was actually a metaphor that used the military’s pre-existing conceptual frameworks to convey the idea that the battlespace was not a blank, uninhabited domain but was actually somebody’s home (McFate and Laurence 2015:5 emphasis added).

It is difficult to understand how exactly equating human lives with other elements of the ‘operational environment’ such as weather or geographical terrain is intended to counter the criticism that the term is dehumanizing; in fact, this sort of reduction appears precisely the type of objectification that Gonzalez is objecting to. Despite this, the above passage makes clear that from the outset the HTS was designed to produce knowledge intended for one particular target audience.

In their reflections upon their time in the field with the project, HTS members constantly re-iterate the importance of tailoring the output of their research so as to allow it to cut through this audience. Kathleen Reedy contends:

> Writing for your audience is pivotal, and the deployed military audience generally wants its information short, sweet and in five bullet points or less. The longest papers I wrote in over two years of being deployed were no more than ten pages (with pictures), and the first page of each was always a few bullets that summarized the entire thing and offered relevant recommendations. An HTT can write longer papers in their own time, after the short report has already come out or by request, but to avoid being dismissed information had to be brief and to the point (Reedy 2015:181).

As was established in the previous section, HTS social scientists fixated upon the need for the program to be 'operationally relevant' to the military; according to Reedy, producing cultural knowledge in a form that was immediately digestible was vital in order to capture the attention of military commanders, and avoid HTTs being excluded and marginalized from the decision-making process. James Dorough-Lewis expresses similar sentiments; while arguing for the need for social science to demonstrate its unique usefulness as distinct from traditional military intelligence – i.e., its capacity to produce and capture an emic understanding of local culture – he insists that this must be presented to the military in a form that is intelligible. He comments:

> Rhetorically, the efforts of social science should always lead to a product that speaks the military's language and references its priorities *without* surrendering social science's unique voice and vision (Dorough-Lewis 2015:192).

This conceptualizes the role of the HTS in a remarkably similar fashion to Said's description of the Orientalist in the quotation which opened this chapter. As with Said's Orientalist, the job of the social scientist becomes the interpretation of the Orient for their compatriots. As Said describes:

> The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object (Said 2003:222).

In Dorough-Lewis description, the HTS takes on an almost dual emic function; not only does it seek to understand the local population in their own terms, but it also endeavors to present this understanding in terms reflective of the emic particularity of its own audience – the US military. As he himself comments:

> Programs to translate social systems as networks of culturally imbued relationships into digestible information, such as has been the intent of the Army's Human Terrain System, may ease the military's level of

> discomfort with developing the contextual fluencies required for mission success amidst the contingencies of polyvalent cultural "realities"… One of the hurdles facing HTS is how to bring the right subject matter experts in the right applied social sciences to answer the right questions in the right time and place, **communicated through the right language and medium** (Dorough-Lewis 2015:208-209 emphasis added).

Some HTS social scientists took this argument a step further; Jennifer Clark and Kathleen Reedy put forward arguments which suggest that, while the production of knowledge in a format appropriate for the military was indeed necessary, it was not sufficient. Rather, they contended that cultural knowledge must be accompanied by actionable recommendations in order to demonstrate true operational relevance. In distinguishing the HTS from another special advisor unit – the Iraqi Advisor Task Force [IQATF] – Clark stressed the role of the HTS in the provision of practical recommendations informed by the cultural knowledge it produced. She comments that while IQATF:

> mostly conducted atmospherics and gauged the population's perception regarding certain subjects, HTS conducted social science research and provided course of action development based on cultural considerations (Clark 2015:147).

This practical orientation appears central to Clark's self-conceptualization of her role as a HTT member. She explains that:

> I wanted to figure out how to best inform the Marines of the problem, while also providing several solutions or "courses of actions" [COAs] for them to consider (Clark 2015:148).

This sentiment is also very apparent in Kathleen Reedy's contribution to McFate and Laurence's edited collection. Reedy's chapter is entitled 'The Four Pillars of Integration: how to make social science work in a war zone,' and is primarily concerned with conveying lessons learned regarding the process of conducting social science research that is useful to the US military. The key to this, according to Reedy, was that cultural

knowledge provided by the HTS should be accompanied by clear actionable recommendations. She cites her work on the Zadran tribe carried out whilst embedded with the 1-33 Cavalry Squadron in Afghanistan. Reedy determined that the tribe did not function as a cohesive political unit as had been previously assumed, and that real authority rested at the village level. Reedy explains:

> Merely recommending that the brigade stop worrying about the tribal issue was not really useful for making positive steps. Explaining to the unit that the information implied that support for the insurgents was largely passive and so could be combated was much more "actionable"… Rather than just providing cultural background, I was able to steer the unit away from one course of action (engage the tribes) and offer them a practical alternative (develop the local government) in order to reduce support for the insurgents (Reedy 2015:168).

According to Reedy, adapting to this need to provide actionable recommendations was the single biggest adaptation she needed to make as part of her work with the HTS. She describes how:

> Learning to accept and work with extremely limited timelines was a major challenge, but continually coming up with practical recommendations was perhaps the most difficult adjustment. Anthropologists are skilled at identifying and assessing social inequities and power dynamics, but often do so from a big picture perspective and with the intent of raising awareness rather than offering immediate, easy-to-follow suggestions on how to alter or improve the situation. Learning how to do that, but then rapidly turning those observations into small-scale changes that a commander could effect on the spot, took some trial and error (Reedy 2015:183).

Despite HTS researchers' claims to be providing a 'voice for the voiceless' or their positioning of themselves as self-appointed advocates for the local population, it is strikingly clear that the knowledge produced through the program was not intended for those who were the subject of its research. In fact, there is only one single occasion

throughout of all the HTS material I have examined where reference is made to research findings being made available to people of Iraq or Afghanistan. In recounting interviews she conducted at a Sunni settlement in Iraq, Jennifer Clark recalls how:

> After an hour of talking, we thanked them and told them where they would be able to find my report. I also told them I would make sure that their concerns were heard (Clark 2015:156).

This seemingly casual comment was striking, as there is no other mention by any former HTS member of making reports accessible to their research subjects. Clark does not provide any further detail regarding the accessibility of the material; there is no mention of where, or in what language, the findings would be published. If anything, this example serves to highlight the extent to which HTS researchers were completely unconcerned by the implications of the failure to allow research subjects access to their output. Interestingly, Brian Brereton pre-empts this criticism when discussing more general anthropological critiques of academics working with the military. He observes:

> Gonzalez and Price suggest that anthropologists who decide to conduct open source intelligence “are not free to share the results of their work with local people who participated in their research.” Yet, how often does an average anthropologist conducting ethnographic research share their work or positively impact a local population? Most anthropological research is theoretically focused and crammed with jargon (Brereton 2015:289).

Brereton raises an excellent point, and in doing so echoes some salient critiques of Western anthropology expressed widely by postcolonial and decolonial scholarship. The implications of this argument will be taken up further elsewhere, but for now it is sufficient to note that Brereton’s observation serves less as defense of HTS than it does as an indictment of wider non-military ethnographic practices. The power relations constituted through research of predominantly vulnerable non-Western populations, and the production of such knowledge for Western academic audiences to the exclusion of the subjects of research demands critical interrogation, and does not render these tendencies within the HTS any less problematic or objectionable.

The US military's position as the sole intended audience for the knowledge is perhaps most clearly evidenced in the neoliberal corporate nomenclature littered throughout the reflections of researchers. Reedy comments:

> Working for a customer rather than for the sake of research also distinguished HTT research from traditional anthropology (2015:183).

The research output of the HTS is frequently referred to in terms of 'cultural products' (Clark 2015:147), while the military are described variously as 'customers' (Reedy 2015:184), 'end-users' (McFate 2015:58) and 'consumers' (Dorough-Lewis 2015:193) of these products. HTS guidelines:

> Recognize their obligations to multiple stakeholders, including their supported military units, local nationals and fellow HTS personnel (Fleuhr Lobban and Lucas 2015:256).

This reference to the local population as 'stakeholders' is the only time this corporate market language is extended to represent the position of the subjects of HTS research. They are never the customers, consumers or end-users for whom the research is produced, and perhaps more importantly, whose demand it is intended to satisfy. Consistent with its Orientalist underpinnings, the research conducted by the HTS was produced by the West, for the West – a translation of the cultural Other so as to facilitate its domination.

4.8 Arbiters of Authenticity

In 1994, acclaimed novelist Amitav Ghosh gave a lecture describing his experience in post-war Cambodia observing a Strategic Investigation Team attached to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. [UNTAC] UNTAC's mandate required the verification of the withdrawal of all Vietnamese troops from the country, and this unit was tasked with identifying so called 'foreign' combatants hiding out among the local population. (Ghosh 1994:418) Ghosh was immediately interested in how this task was to be accomplished, especially considering reliable information he had received from many knowledgeable people who told him that 'it was often impossible to tell the

difference between ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese, even for Cambodian's' (1994:419). Ghosh goes on to describe how the unit enlisted the assistance of a Western area specialist, fluent in both languages, to utilise his skills in order to make determinations about the ethnic background of interviewees on the basis of linguistic cues. Ghosh was deeply troubled by this experience, and argued that it evidenced the need for the inversion of the social scientific gaze toward the development of a new discipline – an ethnography of international peacekeeping. The case is extremely instructive; when faced with the prospect of discerning between two seemingly indistinguishable Others, the Western expert was positioned as the arbiter of authentic ethnicity.

A similar positioning of the social scientist as the arbiter of authenticity of local identity is prominent throughout the reflections of the participants of HTS. Katherine Blue Carroll, a political scientist who served with a HTT in Baghdad from 2008-2009, recalls an approach from a colleague whose Brigade commander had tasked him with determining who the 'real sheikhs' were in his area of operation. He described a situation whereby 'all these people are coming out of the woodwork telling us they are sheiks' but the military commanders had no way of determining whether or not they 'really [were] tribal leaders' (Blue Carroll 2015:132). This request was not an isolated incident, and Blue Carroll goes on to explain that:

> "Who is a real sheikh?" turned out to be something I was asked constantly in Iraq. The question was an important one for the US military, which wanted to work with genuine social leaders who could influence the population (2015:132/133).

Leslie Adrienne Payne describes a similar situation during her time with a HTT in Helmund province in Afghanistan. According to Payne, the central issue they faced was a 'leadership dilemma' in the Sangin region of the province. Conflict with the Taliban had led to an exodus of the region's political leadership. She describes how the British civilian District Support Team in the region was tasked with rebuilding the political infrastructure, but their inability to engage with the grassroots local population had led them to place individuals in positions of power who were not genuine leaders in the eyes of the local population (Payne 2015:226). In response, the HTT developed an interview-based research design with a view to resolving this leadership dilemma by identifying individuals who would qualify as "genuine or legitimate" leaders. She describes how:

> soon after we started, our research began to adopt a cataloguing dimension due to the amount of data we were amassing; we were hearing about so many different people and had to keep track of them over the course of our three missions. We created a comprehensive Excel spreadsheet that tracked the names (the ideal leaders) we were hearing about, their tribal affiliation, how often they were mentioned, why people claimed they were influential, where interviewees lived, and other important information. Trends in the data became apparent, and we soon noticed a handful of men who were repeatedly mentioned as being ideal leaders for Sangin (Payne 2015:228).

Ultimately, political manoeuvring between the British civilian actors and the US military meant that the HTT's recommendations did not result in a change of leadership in the region, but their own view of their role is highly significant. In situations where there was uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of claims to tribal leadership, HTTs were positioned as the ultimate arbiters responsible for the determination of authenticity through the application of research methodologies. Within such a frame, the expert is tasked with the task of sorting the legitimate leader from the illegitimate, and evaluating the desires of the locals by engaging them in their research.

A common thread that emerges from an examination of HTS is the assumption that the self-representations of identity made by people in Iraq and Afghanistan were unreliable and could not be taken at face value. There is a need to scratch below the surface to discover the true identity of those being researched, in order to access the truth as to who they really are. This sentiment is perfectly captured by Jennifer Clark as she describes her time with a HTT in Northern Iraq. In conducting research into a rumoured Kurdish political expansion in Sinjar, she discusses her encounters with the Yezidi people, an ethnic and religious minority indigenous to the region. There was uncertainty as to whether the Yezidi constituted a distinct ethnic group or not. She describes an interview with a local regional government party leader whereby he claimed that:

> the Yezidi south of Sinjar were not really Yezidi, that the Yezidi were actually Kurds, and that the others were liars and false about their loyalties. It made [her] wonder about the divide in the Yezidi community

> between their declared origins. Were they Kurds or weren't they? (Clark 2015:156)

This desire to know 'who they really are' lies at the heart of the role of the researcher as the ultimate arbiter of authentic identity.

4.9 Orientalist Adventurers

> The British agent-Orientalist—Lawrence, Bell, Philby, Storrs, Hogarth —during and after World War I took over both the role of expert adventurer eccentric (created in the nineteenth century by Lane, Burton, Hester Stanhope) and the role of colonial authority, whose position is in a central place next to the indigenous ruler (Said 2003:246).

The figure of the swashbuckling Western adventurer has been pervasive throughout the history of Orientalism. This expert-adventurer represents the very embodiment of the colonial spirit, setting forth into the alien and mysterious East on a journey of discovery and adventure. Richard Francis Burton is perhaps the greatest exemplar of this figure; Said remarks that:

> As a traveling adventurer Burton conceived of himself as sharing the life of the people in whose lands he lived. Far more successfully than T. E. Lawrence, he was able to become an Oriental; he not only spoke the language flawlessly, he was able to penetrate to the heart of Islam and, disguised as an Indian Muslim doctor, accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca (Said 2003:195).

The reflections of former HTT members often betray a similar sense of adventure when describing their deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. This is most clearly captured in Ted Callaghan's essay *'An Anthropologist in Afghanistan,'* where he describes his time with a HTT in eastern Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan (2015). While working on his PhD fieldwork in Afghanistan, Callahan became aware that the army was developing HTS as an embedded social science project in the country. In describing his motivation to join the project, Callahan comments:

> As the situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate, and my fieldwork wound down, I increasingly had the feeling that I was missing out on one of the epochal events of my lifetime, that all the action was passing me by (2015:97).

The desire to participate in the project is framed entirely in terms of the opportunity it provided to him for experience; the idea that he would miss his chance to participate invokes a self-described 'fear of missing out.' Not only does Callahan's account crassly conceive of the war as a vehicle for adventure, but it also invokes patently Orientalist tropes his is depiction of his experiences. In fact, Callahan directly references the figure of T.E Lawrence when describing his work with the 'Zadran tribe.'

> Researching the Zadran was how I imagined HTS to be, allowing me to go to remote places and do valuable research. Caught up in my Lawrence of Arabia daydreams, I also took some stupid risks. We nearly lost an entire patrol during two ambushes in Harawara, trying to learn about the pine nut harvest (2015:110).

Callahan's 'Lawrence of Arabia' daydreams appear to have coloured much of his experience of Afghanistan, and crass Orientalist fetishization is recurrent throughout his recollections. In one instance he recalls a night spent camping out in the field:

> I spent all the next morning watching camel caravans passing through the village and couldn't wait to find out where they were headed. To me, nothing is as evocative of the mystique of Central Asia as a group of nomads, all their possessions lashed to a procession of camels, moving across some desert waste (2015:103).

The 'faintly outlined stereotype as a camel-riding nomad' (Said 2003:285) is perhaps the most enduring and foundational Orientalist representation of 'the Arab' and the people of the Middle-East more generally. In describing this scene as evocative of the mystique of Central Asia, Callahan re-affirms the underlying conception of the Orient as a space of strangeness, exoticism and mystery. While the self-imaginings of the author as a figure in the mould of Lawrence of Arabia, and the wistful description of the scene of the camel caravan are indeed significant, perhaps the most damning indictment of Callahan comes

in his description of the contrasting settings inside and outside of Forward Operating Base [FOB] Salerno in Khost Province, Afghanistan. He describes how:

> Leaving the well-tended, orderly FOB was akin to entering a different world: the chaotic hustle and bustle of the East, with donkey carts carrying proud men wearing imposing grey or black turbans and their burqa-ed women sitting behind them, and everywhere the dusty, dun-coloured Afghan landscape. (Callahan 2015:101)

Callahan depicts the perimeter of the base as the border between East and West. The base – as representative of a Western space transplanted in the Afghan landscape – is 'well-tended and orderly'. In contrast to this order is the chaos of the outside – the 'hustle and bustle' that he suggests is characteristic of the East. The scene is once again quintessentially Orientalist; the trope of the 'proud' figures of the middle Eastern men on the donkey cart, and '**their** burqa-ed women sitting behind them' captures a timelessness, and a state of gendered subordination. Callahan continues to explain:

> The troops call it "going outside the wire", but that fails to convey the incredible cognitive shift required to drive outside the front gate. Yes, you were still in Afghanistan, but in a moment all the rules had changed. You were now living in a Kipling poem, where "All flesh is grass" and "The odds are on the cheaper man" (2015:101).

The invocation of Kipling is as jarring as it is telling – drawing a direct link between the American led occupation of Afghanistan and Britain's past colonial endeavours. Kipling, the proclaimed 'great poet of empire' was an ardent advocate of colonialism and the imperial project. He saw imperialism as a moral imperative – the 'white man's burden' to spread civilization, order and stability to inferior peoples throughout the world. The Kipling poem to which Callahan is referring is "Arithmetic on the Frontier" – a poem dealing with the precarity of life on the frontier during the second Anglo-Afghan War. The poem recounts the considerable monetary cost of educating a British soldier, only for them to be killed in hostile territory by *'the cheaper man*.' Kipling goes on to present an image of Afghanistan as a place where the hillsides teem 'with home-bred hordes' who are 'cheap alas, as we are dear.*'* That Callahan conceives of the space outside the base as living in this particular Kipling poem perfectly captures his view of his own position in

the narrative – that of the expert-adventurer in search of action, immersed in the dangerous and mysterious East.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored a variety of themes that emerge from the self-reflections of researchers on their time in the field with HTS in Iraq and Afghanistan. It has explored their commitment to the exceptional nature of knowledge produced through the deployment of social scientific methods, and in particular, arguments which posit the unique ability of social scientists to translate truly emic knowledge for the consumption of lay Western audiences. Furthermore, it has examined the manner in which researchers conceptualized their participation in HTS as a means through which they served as voices of the voiceless by representing the will, desires and interests of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan in the military decision-making process. The following sections problematized this self-representation by interrogating the nature of the knowledge produced by HTS research. This demonstrated how the researchers' own descriptions acknowledged that the 'cultural knowledge' produced by HTTs was only useful insofar as it was operationally relevant to the military and of clear instrumental to the achievement of military objectives. Further to this, the next section demonstrated how the format of this knowledge was invariably tailored specifically in a manner that was intelligible to a US military audience, and explored arguments which suggested that knowledge was only valuable when accompanied by clearly actionable recommendations for specific action. The chapter then examined the propensity of HTS researchers to position themselves as ultimate arbiter of authenticity – conceiving of the role of the expert to discern the truth in a situation where the locals are considered to be unreliable narrators. The final section of the chapter concluded with an exploration of researcher's representations of their time in the field in terms of the fulfillment of a sense of personal adventure. These representations evoke images of the swashbuckling Orientalist adventurers of the colonial past, and also reproduce some of the most egregious, racialized stereotypes most associated with Orientalist discourses. The theoretical ramifications of the researcher's reflections examined in this chapter will be further explored in the conclusion of this thesis, where I will further consider their implications regarding debates surrounding HTS and the practice of applied social science.

5. The Trouble with Tribe.

5.1 Introduction

> What is the tribe? It is very largely a creation of laws drawn up by a colonial state which imposes group identities on individual subjects and thereby institutionalises group life (Mamdani 2012b:21).

The concept of 'tribe' is embedded in the intellectual foundations of the Human Terrain System. In a series of articles published in US military journals between 2005-2007, Montgomery McFate, American anthropologist and primary intellectual architect of the programme, outlined her case for the deployment of academic experts in the collection and refinement of what she termed 'knowledge of adversary culture' (McFate:2005b) in Iraq and Afghanistan. For McFate, this cultural knowledge had become an imperative in light of the failure of traditional modes of warfare and the doctrine of force superiority to deal with the emergent, unorthodox insurgencies in both countries. As I have previously established, HTS was initially conceived as an exclusively anthropological endeavour. McFate made the case that 'across the board, the national security structure needs to be infused with anthropology, a discipline invented to support warfighting in the tribal zone' (2005a:43). She criticised the intelligence community and the Department of Defence for their failure to engage the social science 'whose primary object of study has traditionally been non-Western, tribal societies' (McFate 2005a:26). Roberto Gonzalez has observed that while the wider cultural turn in late modern warfare has seen the proliferation of the concept of ethnicity in analyses of so-called communal conflict, 'military planners apply the "tribal"' concept almost exclusively to Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries, Afghanistan, Pakistan and (increasingly) Africa' (Gonzalez 2009d:16).

McFate's analyses of Iraq and Afghanistan which informed and justified the creation of HTS were predicated upon two distinct assumptions relating to the concept of 'tribe'. Firstly, McFate assumes that the social organisation of these countries was characterised by a deep, latent tribalism (Dunne 2013). In fact, in the case of Iraq, McFate explicitly suggests that 'tribes are the basic organizing social fact of life' (2005b:44). She proclaims:

> **the most important element of local culture is the tribe and the associated patronage system.** The majority of the population belong to one of the 150 major tribes, the largest containing more than a million members and the smallest a few thousand (McFate 2005b:45 Emphasis added).

Secondly, McFate posited that given this centrality of tribe to Iraqi social structure and identity, the insurgency itself – both in terms of the explanations for its emergence, and indeed its structure and organisation – could only be adequately understood through the lens of 'tribe.' She suggests that the insurgency directly arose from the failure of military planners and civilian policy makers to address the power vacuum which followed the collapse of the Iraqi state.

> At a strategic level, certain policymakers within the Bush administration apparently misunderstood the tribal nature of Iraqi culture and society. They assumed that the civilian apparatus of the government would remain intact after the regime was decapitated by an aerial strike, an internal coup, or a military defeat. In fact, when the United States cut off the hydra's Ba'thist head, **power reverted to its most basic and stable form—the tribe. The tribal insurgency is a direct result of our misunderstanding the Iraqi culture** (McFate 2005b:34 emphasis added).

For McFate, the moral imperative for violent resistance against the US led occupation was rooted in traditional rules which governed the use of force in Iraqi society. She observes that:

> 'tribal customary norms for warfighting and conceptions regarding legitimate use of force derive neither from Iraqi civil law nor from sharia. Rather, they derive from the cultures of Iraq's tribes (2008:291).

Not only was tribe central to explaining the justifications for insurgent violence, it was also fundamental to understanding the way in which this violence was operationalised. According to McFate, the very organisational structure of the insurgency was 'not military, but tribal' (2005a:24), thus any attempts to understand and predict patterns of

insurgent violence through the lens of traditional military tactics were doomed to failure. Understanding the tribal nature of the insurgency was the starting point for military engagement; McFate argued that 'tribal use of force follows predictable patterns that, if understood, offer opportunities to states engaged in conflict with tribes' (2008:297). She goes on to suggest that insurgent violence can understood through what she identifies as four traditional modes of clan violence: blood feud, collective self-defence, the restoration of honour and raiding (McFate 2008, Dunne 2013). She specifically relates these to the experience of insurgent violence when she comments:

> Attacks on coalition troops in the Sunni triangle, for example, follow predictable patterns of tribal warfare: avenging the blood of a relative (al tha'r); demonstrating manly courage in battle (al-muruwwah); and upholding manly honor (al-sharaf) (McFate 2005b:43).

McFate's work illustrates that the view of tribe as the defining characteristic of identity and social organisation in Iraq and Afghanistan was embedded in the very foundation of HTS. This chapter will expand upon this, and critically interrogate the deployment of the concept of tribe in the research of the HTS in Iraq. In order to achieve this, the chapter will proceed as follows: firstly, I will briefly examine some theoretical approaches to the concept of tribe which seek to position it in terms of its historical role as a technology of governance and domination. Here I will provide a brief overview of David Sneath's narrative history of the trajectory of the tribe concept within the discipline of anthropology, before introducing Mahmood Mamdani's account of the roots of the tribe concept as a technology of colonial governance. I will then briefly explore some existing critical scholarship around the tribe concept and the cultural turn in Iraq and Afghanistan, which will set the stage for the substantive analysis to follow. The next section will explore a body of HTS research which focuses upon the system of tribal law in Iraq, and its potential to provide justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of widespread ethnic and sectarian violence. This will analyse the research of former HTT member Katherine Blue Carroll in which she outlines her argument for the instrumentalization of tribal dispute resolution mechanisms as an antidote to sectarian violence in Iraq. The next section will focus upon the work of HTS researcher Adam Silverman, and examine his arguments – derived from his findings from a 'tribal study' in the field – relating to the failure of the new Iraqi government to establish legitimacy among the people of Iraq. Silverman argues that this crisis of legitimacy is a direct result of the failure to incorporate features of traditional tribal governance into the structures of the new State, and positions the tribal

system as the embodiment of the enduring, essential nature of the people of Iraq. The final section of the chapter will draw upon the arguments in the preceding sections, and introduce additional HTS research, to demonstrate the extent to which the program relied upon, and reproduced, a conceptualisation of the Iraqi tribe as a highly structured, hierarchically ordered segmentary tribal system. This image, I will argue, is deeply consistent with the anachronistic application of an old anthropological concept of culture, and – as with earlier colonial discourses analysed by Mahmood Mamdani – serves to reproduce a crude binary dichotomy between the civilised, individualistic, and rational Westerner, and a static, culture-bound and communal, 'native' Other.

5.2 The Tribe Concept

5.2.1 David Sneath and the Anthropological Tribe

The idea that tribe is the central organising principal of society in Iraq and Afghanistan was pervasive throughout the discourses from which HTS emerged. Roberto Gonzalez has labelled the deployment of the concept by militarized social scientists as 'peculiar' and 'outdated' (2009d:18) and comments that 'few anthropologists today would consider using the term tribe as an analytical category, or even as a concept for practical application (2009d:15). The tribe was at the very centre of the early anthropological imagination, and for much of its history 'tribal society was widely thought to be the primary subject of anthropological enquiry' (Sneath 2016). However, as early as 1954 E.R. Leach was expressing doubts around the validity of the term:

> I would claim that it is largely an academic fiction to suppose that in a "normal" ethnographic situation one ordinarily finds distinct "tribes" distributed about the map in an orderly fashion with clearcut boundaries between them…. My own view is that the ethnographer has often only managed to discern the existence of a tribe because he took it as axiomatic that this kind of cultural entity must exist (Leach 1954:290).

In his entry on 'tribe' for the Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology, David Sneath provides a concise genealogy of the concept within the discipline (Sneath 2016). He traces the emergence of the modern concept of tribe during the period of colonial

expansion, its incorporation into social evolutionist theories of primitive society in the 19th century and its persistence throughout much of the 20th century. However, in line with Gonzalez, Sneath concludes that:

> within western social and cultural anthropology it has been largely abandoned as a sociological category… By the beginning of this century "the tribe" has been widely discredited as an analytical term outside some specialised fields such as theories of early state formation (Sneath 2016).

While it is beyond the scope of this section to consider this history in detail, it is necessary to briefly consider three of the central problems with the concept identified by Sneath. Firstly, we will examine issues around the conceptual incoherence of the concept of tribe; secondly, we will examine issues relating to its linkages to theories of social evolutionism and related connotations of primitivism; and finally, we will explore the extent to which tribe is embedded in the logic and operation of European colonialism. The exploration of these issues will set the scene for the forthcoming analysis of the functioning of tribe in the work of HTS in Iraq, and indeed the subsequent chapter on Afghanistan.

Perhaps the most significant problem with tribe as a unit of analysis relates to its lack of conceptual coherence and its almost complete definitional instability. The term has been applied to a vast array of peoples and societies throughout the history of anthropology, however the extent to which it can be said to denote a unique and identifiable social form is highly questionable. Sneath argues that:

> The word was applied to social categories so radically different as to stretch any notion of common criteria to breaking point; from groups of a few hundred 'hunter-gatherers' like the Araweté of the Amazon (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 49) to the millions of people in Nigeria and Benin identified as Yoruba, with a long history of rival city states (Arnett 1933: 401, Sneath 2016).

In his 1990 piece entitled 'Anthropologists, Historians and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East', Richard Tapper examines the deployment of the tribe concept in the study of societies in the Middle East. He observes:

> The nature of indigenous concepts of tribe, whether explicit ideologies or implicit practical notions, has too often been obscured by the apparent desire of investigators (anthropologists, historians, and administrators) to establish a consistent and stable terminology for political groups. Such investigators seem to believe that tribes are necessarily ordered in a hierarchical or segmentary system - with distinct terms referring to groups at separate levels - that can be translated, for example, as confederacy, tribe, clan, lineage, section, or whatever. Unfortunately, Middle Eastern indigenous categories …. are no more specific than are English terms such as "family" or "group." Even in the most apparently consistent segmentary terminology, individual terms are ambiguous…. Most of the terms that have been translated as "tribe" contain such ambiguities, and attempts to give them—or tribe—precision as to either level, function, or essence are misdirected (Tapper 1990:55-56).

Tapper suggests that attempts to establish tribe as a consistent and stable form serve to obscure and flatten the particularities of groups, societies and political structures to which the lens is applied.

Between 2005 and 2007 Montgomery McFate published numerous articles arguing for the creation of HTS, and despite the frequent invocations of notions of tribe in these arguments, she makes no attempt to conceptually define her use of the term, nor does she acknowledge the theoretical controversy surrounding tribe within the discipline of anthropology itself. It is not until a 2008 paper, “The Memory of War”: Tribes and the Legitimate Use of Force in Iraq**,** that McFate engages in any reflexive consideration of tribe as a unit of analysis (McFate 2008b). Here she acknowledges that ‘Anthropologists have been arguing bitterly among themselves for many years whether or not tribes exist, and if so, what their relationship is to the state’ (McFate 2008b:292). She then provides a brief overview of contesting conceptions of tribe which have been expounded by anthropologists, and in light of this academic contestation, concedes that ‘tribes show so much variation that it is sometimes difficult to recognize what they have in common’ (McFate 2008b:292). However, despite this concession McFate goes on to

suggest that a generalisable concept of the tribe can in fact be established. She comments:

> Given this variability in the form and structure, it is nevertheless possible to make some broad observations about tribes. Anthropologists generally define a tribe as "an autonomous, genealogically structured group in which the rights of individuals are largely determined by their membership in corporate descent groups, such as lineages… This tendency is rooted in a kinship system where patriarchal lineage is grouped agnatically (McFate 2008:293).

The definition offered by McFate captures the key commonality upon which traditional anthropological conceptions of the tribe concept have been based: namely that tribes are a unique social form insofar as they constitute groups in which structure and belonging are based upon notions of common descent and genealogy. Sneath examines the emergence of these ideas in the 19th century work of Henry Lewis Morgan and Henry Maine; he goes on to describe how notions of kinship were formalised into a distinct tribal model in the work of British Social Anthropologists in the 20th century, largely based upon Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's accounts of the Neur people of the Nile Valley (Sneath 2016). Tribe was considered as a segmentary lineage system which was:

> proposed as a general model for non-state tribal societies in which the branching segments of a unilineal genealogy formed political and territorial units, composed of the descendants of common ancestors. These grouped together on the basis of their genealogical distance to create successively larger political unit (Sneath 2016).

Despite McFate's acknowledgement of the historical contestation regarding the meaning of the term 'tribe' within anthropology, her attempt to rescue a generalisable tribe concept is simply a regurgitation of this segmentary lineage model favoured by 20th century British social anthropologists. Not only does this represent a narrow and particular vision of the tribe which proposed itself as a general model for 'non-state tribal societies', but it also 'reflected the enduring influence of [Lewis H.] Morgan and evolutionist social theory' (Sneath 2016).

It is precisely this entanglement with Morganian social evolutionism that Sneath cites as the second major contributing factor to the death of the tribe concept in anthropology (Sneath 2016). Sneath observes how the grand theories of historical progress and social evolution of the 19th and 20th centuries 'wove the term tribe into the narrative of primitive society governed by the principles of kinship' (Sneath 2016). These social evolutionary narratives implied a liberal teleological view of history as a series of evolutionary stages through which human society would develop from primitive pre-state forms to the emergence of the liberal state and civilised modernity. Sneath explains how:

> The progress from barbarism to civilization entailed the change in social organization from one based on egalitarian kinship to one structured by hierarchical and territorial administration. This theory of change became the frame in which the anthropological conception of tribe developed. As the unit of barbaric society, then, the tribe stood in contrast to the state (Sneath 2016).

In the latter half of the 20th century, many anthropologists grew increasingly sceptical of this linear view of the development of human society, and the crude binary oppositions between the primitive and the modern, barbarism and civilisation, and pre-state social forms and the state, upon which this teleology was built. Sneath identified early critiques beginning in the 1960s in which Fried (1966) and Southall (1970) 'undermined the notion of the tribe as a pre-stage in social evolution and pointed to the incoherence of the concept'. Anarchist anthropologists such as Pierre Clastres and James C. Scott were to vigorously take up this critique of social evolutionary understandings of so called 'primitive' societies. As opposed to the traditional understanding of 'primitive' societies as societies which have yet to develop the state, Clastres repositioned indigenous societies as 'societies against the state' (Clastres 1977). This implies that indigenous societies have actively resisted the internal development of the state and the external imposition of state structures upon them. Through his ethnographic work with the Guayaki Indians in Paraguay, Clastres (1998) practically demonstrates the way Guayaki social organisation is deliberately structured so as to prevent the emergence of hierarchy which would place one member of society in a position of control or domination over the other. Similarly, James C. Scott's seminal ethnography of Upland Southeast Asia challenges the depictions of the people of the 'Zomia' region as a living relic of a primitive distant past (2009). Scott explains:

> Zomia is the largest remaining region of the world whose peoples have not yet fully been incorporated into nation-states. Its days are numbered. Not so very long ago, however, such self-governing peoples were the great majority of humankind. Today, they are seen from the valley kingdoms as 'our living ancestors,' 'what we were like before we discovered wet-rice cultivation, Buddhism and civilization.' On the contrary, I argue that hill peoples are best understood as runaway, fugitive, maroon communities who have, over the course of two millennia, been fleeing the oppressions of state-making projects in the valleys – slavery, conscription, taxes corvée labor, epidemics and warfare. Most of the areas in which they reside may be aptly called shatter zones or zones of refuge (Scott 2009: ix).

With the emergence of these ethnographic critiques of social evolution, 'tribe' as it denoted a generalised pre-state society characterised by relations of kinship no longer held conceptual utility for most anthropologists.

The final major contributing factor to the death of the tribe in anthropology identified by Sneath (2016) is the concept's historical relationship with colonialism. This was, of course, deeply related to its social evolutionary connotations, and as a catch all term denoting primitiveness, the tribe concept was central to 'triumphalist Euroamerican narratives that justified colonial domination and claims of superiority' (Sneath 2016). Sneath describes how:

> In the post-colonial era, anthropologists became increasingly critical of the legacy of colonial ideology and its terminology. Historical examination quickly revealed the ways in which many 'tribes' had been constructed in the colonial era; often their names themselves were vague terms used by outsiders that later became institutionalised in administrative categories (Sneath 2016).

In fact, scholars such as Mahmood Mamdani consider the tribe concept to be inseparable from its historical legacy as a tool of colonialism. This perspective understands the 'tribe' not as a distinct, identifiable social form with an objective and independent existence outside of the structures of the state, but rather as a category produced by Western

knowledge systems which was then projected throughout the colonies as a technology of imperial governance and conquest.

5.2.2 Mamdani: the tribe as technology of colonial governance

In a 2012 article published in the London Review of Books, noted post-colonial scholar Mahmood Mamdani (2012b) asks the question 'What is a tribe?' Mamdani's work had long been concerned with the ways in which particular understandings of 'native' identity have been historically mobilized as a tool of colonial governance in Western imperialist projects [see Mamdani 1996; 2001; 2009; 2012a; 2012b]. In this article, and in a book which was to follow the same year, Mamdani examines the 19th century shift in British colonial approaches to governance from the existing model of direct rule – which involved the direct British administration of colonial territories and was underwritten by the pursuit of the eradication of difference and the Westernisation of indigenous societies – to a system of devolved governance referred to as indirect rule (Mamdani 2012a; 2012b, Dunne 2013). Unlike direct rule, indirect rule was underwritten by a logic of pluralism and a recognition that the need to 'reconstitute the colonial project on a more durable basis' (Mamdani 2012b) would require the management of difference, and not its erasure. Mamdani contends that the assimilationist project of colonialism was under pressure from unrest throughout the empire – exemplified by the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865 – and proponents of indirect rule presented it as a pragmatic response to 'a crisis of mission and of justification' (2012b). According to Mamdani, a British legal scholar named Henry Maine was the foremost of these proponents, and it was his theory of native identity which would provide the intellectual foundations for this new mode of colonial governmentality. As Mamdani describes:

> The assimilationist project, of which the model was the Roman Empire, was seen to have failed. In the period of reflection that followed, the colonial mission underwent a change from one of civilisation to conservation, and of progress to order (Mamdani 2012b).

For Maine, colonial projects were faltering due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of 'native' and indigenous identity. Unsurprisingly given

his background as a scholar of jurisprudence and law, Maine's theory of the native derived from a binary opposition of what he saw as native customary law, and the civil legal tradition of the West (Mamdani 2012a:20). Maine suggested that the defining characteristic of 'native' people was their adherence to customary law which, unlike progressive Western civil legal systems, was ultimately static, enduring and resistant to progress (Dunne 2013:8). Mamdani describes how Maine's theorisation of the distinctiveness of customary law:

> distinguished the West from the non-West, universal civilisation from local custom and, crucially, the settler from the native, thereby laying the groundwork for a theory of nativism. If the settler was modern, the native was not; if the settler was defined by history, the native was defined by geography; if modern polities were defined by legislation and sanction, those of the native were defined by habitual observance (Mamdani 2012b).

Following from this, Maine concluded that the universal imposition of Western systems of governance and law were unsuited to the governance of 'native' peoples, and instead, colonial governance would require deference to the custom and tradition according to which 'native' peoples lived their lives. Interestingly, Mamdani draws a direct link between Maine's articulation of primitive native societies and the identification of 'tribal kinship' systems with primitive pre-state societies examined in the previous section. Mamdani observes:

> A precursor of the great 20th-century ethnographers, Maine was intrigued by the use of kinship as a basis for social order, including what was and was not permissible. Indeed, like the later ethnographers, he took kinship to be the central fact of primitive society. Yet the more attentive he became to the local and the customary, the more he confined the native in a separate conceptual domain, shut off from the world of the settler by a fundamental distinction between stationary and progressive societies. Culture was cloistered and unchanging in the non-West, transformative and progressive in the West. Native tradition, it followed, was a triumph of locality over time (Mamdani 2012b).

This connection is fitting, for it was the category of 'tribe' which would become the primary category through which indirect rule would conceptualise, categorise, order and govern those who were designated as primitive and native.

Mamdani's understanding of tribe views the concept as a Western technology of governance developed during the colonial encounter. He explains:

> What is the tribe? It is very largely a creation of laws drawn up by a colonial state which imposes group identities on individual subjects and thereby institutionalises group life… The distinction between race and tribe was vital to the technology of colonial governance, and the census was an important instrument of this technology. When a census-taker entered your name, it was either as a member of a race or as a member of a tribe. The important distinction, in other words, was not between coloniser and colonised, but between native and non-native: the race/tribe distinction cut across the single category of the colonised. Races were said to comprise all those officially categorised as non-indigenous to Africa, whether they were indisputably foreign (Europeans, Asians) or whether their foreignness was the result of an official designation (Arabs, Coloureds, Tutsi). Tribes, by contrast, were all those defined as indigenous in origin. When the state officially distinguished non-indigenous races from indigenous tribes, it paid heed to one single characteristic, origin, and totally disregarded another, residence (Mamdani 2012b)

Thus, tribe became a distinct conceptual category which denoted the indigenous native in opposition to all those considered foreign, who were instead categorised according to race. Under indirect rule regimes, races would be subject to a universal civil law, whilst each designated tribe would be subject to its own customary tribal law. Ultimately these tribes were administrative units, and the process through which tribal identity was assigned did not follow any consistent criteria. Mamdani observes that:

> Tribal identity tended to coincide with what anthropologists call ethnic identity – by which they usually mean language-based, cultural identity – but this was not always the case. In some instances, the same ethnic

> group was divided into several administrative tribes. In others, tribes were designated arbitrarily – or 'invented', as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger meant the term in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). The common aspect of all these cases is that tribe was everywhere an administrative unit during the colonial period, and tribal identity an officially designated administrative identity. The system of native administration and indirect rule transformed cultural identity into political identity, and ethnicity into tribe (Mamdani 2012b).

Those designated as members of tribes were further – often arbitrarily – sub-divided into native and non-native tribes (Mamdani 2012b). The designation of native tribe conferred belonging to a specific territorial homeland within which that tribe held significant privileges and authority. Tribal people designated as non-native to a particular area were denied access to land, precluded from participating in governance and administration and were subject to the customary law and legal authority of the tribe designated as native. Where much of pre-colonial Africa was characterised by pluralistic and decentralised leadership and decision-making processes, colonial powers frequently invested authority in male authority figures designated as tribal chiefs. Mamdani explains:

> Once a single chief – always a male and an elder – was exalted as the sole traditional authority, it was a short step to define tradition, too, as unitary, non-contradictory and binding. Having identified and appointed local allies in the project of 'indirect rule' and determined their role as 'customary', the colonial state became both the custodian and the enforcer of tradition. In this sense colonialism enacted one of the first 'fundamentalisms' of the modern period, advancing the proposition that every colonised group had an original and pure tradition, whether religious or ethnic, and should return to that condition as a matter of course or be obliged to do so by law (Mamdani 2012b).

Far from reflecting pre-existing social structure, the colonial production of tribal administrative categories produced new hierarchical structures which concentrated power in the hands of individual male authority figures and formed the basis for new exclusions through which so called non-native tribes would be discriminated against and disenfranchised.

Mamdani suggests that tribe cannot be understood as a distinguishable, essential, pre-state social formation, and demonstrates how this understanding of the tribe concept is itself a product of colonial discourses. He concludes:

> Did tribes exist before colonialism? If we understand by tribe an ethnic group with a common language, it did. But tribe as an administrative entity that distinguishes between natives and non-natives and systematically discriminates in favour of the former and against the latter – defining access to land and participation in local governance and rules for settling disputes according to tribal identity – certainly did *not* exist before colonialism. One may ask: did race exist before racism? As differences in pigmentation, or in phenotype, it did. But as a fulcrum for group discrimination based on "race" difference, it did not… Like race, tribe became a single, exclusive, and total identity only with colonialism. Above all, tribe was a politically driven, modern – *totalizing* – identity (Mamdani 2012a:73-74).

Oliver Belcher eloquently summarises Mamdani's position when he comments:

> In other words, tribes were—and continue to be—a complicated colonial invention and project that is as much of a temporal undertaking as a geographical one, with colonizers shaping the past, present, and future of entire populations through an extensive scholarly, legal, and administrative apparatus (Belcher 2013:89).

In the sections that follow, this study will demonstrate the extent to which this colonial construction of the tribe concept continued to influence projects of Western intervention into the 21st century. This understanding of tribe as an instrumental technology of domination will illuminate its function in the research of HTS in Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, the following sections will interrogate the way in which tribe continued to rely upon and reproduce a crude binary opposition between a primitive, custom-bound native and the rational and progressive West. They will also explore the extent to which tribe is

representative of a stable, authentic, indigenous form which social scientists argue can serve as a counterbalance to the disruptive influence of insidious foreign forces. But perhaps most importantly, the examination of the role of tribe in HTS research in Iraq and Afghanistan will consider its function as a technology of pacification and governance.

5.3 HTS and Tribal Law in New Iraq

5.3.1 Sectarian Violence and the 'Sulha'

Amongst the most significant issues relating to tribe in the research produced by members of HTTs in Iraq were arguments for the leveraging of traditional tribal law and dispute resolution mechanisms as remedy to the sectarian violence which followed the invasion, and the capacity of such processes to promote reconciliation and stability within the newly constituted Iraqi state. These arguments overlap with those identified by Oliver Belcher in relation to the establishment of tribal militias in Iraq and Afghanistan insofar as they position tribe as an anchor for stability in the face of the fracturing forces of insurgency and rampant sectarianism. Foremost among the advocates for the utility of tribal law was political scientist and HTT member Katherine Blue Carroll. Blue Carroll served with HTTs in northwest and southwest Baghdad between 2008 and 2009. In 2011, having left the Human Terrain System and returned to academia, she published a paper entitled *Tribal Law and Reconciliation in Iraq* based upon over 30 interviews conducted with Iraqis during her time in the field. The paper argued that as of 2009 the new Iraqi government had failed to take the necessary measures to reconcile Iraq's Sunni and Shi'a communities in the aftermath of protracted and bloody sectarian violence; in stark contrast to this failure of government, Blue Carroll suggests that 'Iraq's tribal leaders began working as soon as security improved in 2007 to re-knit the Iraqi community through the processes of tribal law' (2011:11). She argues that although the establishment of tribal militias to oppose Al Qaeda is widely understood, the key role of tribal law as a vehicle for reconciliation has received insufficient attention, and as such there has been a failure to understand the potential for such tribal dispute resolution mechanisms to contribute to long-term security and stability (2011:12).

The paper opens with a brief overview of what Blue Carroll refers to as tribal or customary law in Iraq. It describes a codified system of laws with little variation between tribes which centre around the mechanism of dispute resolution known as the 'sulha'.

According to Blue Carroll, there are three main aspects of the sulha process; firstly, the participants set out to determine the facts of the case. Next, with the guidance of the legal codes the process will determine the level of payment which must be made by the perpetrator's family or tribe to those of the victim in order to avoid retaliation for the crime. Finally, once this payment, referred to as fasel, has been determined, the sulha ends with the enactment of 'communal rituals of reconciliation' (Blue Carroll 2011:12). Blue Carroll contends that:

> in a culture requiring that honour be restored after a wrong through the taking of revenge against the perpetrator or his[sic] extended family, sulha helps the community avoid feuds (2011:13).

Blue Carroll also explains that the process can be invoked in the resolution of a wide variety of grievances, from minor insults to the honour of an individual, family or tribe to killings or other serious violent crimes, and the mediators in the process are most often tribal sheiks (2011:12-13). The picture of tribal structure this paints is significant and will be explored in more detail later in the chapter. In the following section of the paper Blue Carroll provides a more substantial breakdown of the steps of the sulha process; a detailed examination of these steps is not necessary for the purposes at hand, but a couple of points are noteworthy here in terms of Blue Carroll's contention that the process could be adapted to deal with the aftermath of sectarian conflict in post-war Iraq. Firstly, Blue Carroll contends that tribal dispute resolution mechanisms were primarily intended to operate in situations where the facts regarding the case are known and accepted (2011:14). Despite this, it is acknowledged that the process does have an investigative function that can be deployed; this involves the formation of a Judicial Council composed of Sheiks from independent tribes to investigate and examine evidence, and even allows for appeal to a higher tribal judge when the judgement of the council is contested by one of the parties. Secondly, the process does not conclude with the payment of the fasel; the rituals of reconciliation which follow are designed to re-establish peaceful and civil relations between both parties with a view to fostering ongoing peace.

Blue Carroll goes on to briefly examine the history of tribal law in Iraq prior to the 2003 invasion. She begins by describing the Tribal Disputes Act of 1916 whereby the British – in line with the strategy of indirect rule which we have previously discussed – formally recognised the jurisdiction of tribal law in so called tribal areas (2011:18).

According to Blue Carroll, the century that followed was characterised by the state's attempts to undermine the role of tribal law and unify the legal system under state control. She suggests that the state was largely successful in this regard during the height of its powers in the 1970's and 1980's; although tribal law was never fully eliminated, civil law was dominant as the state court system operated throughout the country (2011:18). However, with the weakening of the Iraqi state in the 1990s, Blue Carroll contends that the Baathist party and Saddam Hussein were compelled to devolve power to tribal leaders in exchange for their political support, allowing them greater control over dispute resolution functions and the re-emergence of the tribal justice system. As a result, the Sheiks interviewed claimed that, just prior to the invasion in 2003, a high volume of Sulhas were taking place even in the urban centre of Baghdad. The picture Blue Carroll presents of the history of the relationship between tribal and civil law in Iraq is consistent with many representations of Arab states; it suggests the existence of parallel levels of legal authority in dialectical relation to one another. When state power is strong, its capacity to provide security allows for the proliferation of state law and the suppression of tribal legal mechanisms. Similarly, in the absence of a strong state, tribal dispute resolution processes re-emerge.

Although published following Blue Carrol's departure from HTS, this research is a quintessential example of the logic of the programme and the logic of the cultural turn more broadly. It begins with a problematic – in this case the resentment, tensions and enmity which existed following the sectarian violence of 2006-2007 – which provides an obstacle to the achievement of American military and developmental objectives. Through a combination of primary field research in Baghdad and secondary background research into Iraqi tribal systems, Blue Carroll puts forward an evidence-based case for the leveraging of tribal dispute reconciliation processes to ameliorate the negative consequences of sectarian violence and 're-knit the Iraqi community through the processes of tribal law' (2011:11). There were three main thrusts of the argument; firstly, Blue Carroll contends that as violence subsided after 2007, her research found exponential increases in the use of the Sulha process to address cases of sectarian violence, and that the process was successfully deployed to create reconciliation between the Sunni and Shi'a in Baghdad where the new government had failed completely to do so (2011:22). Secondly, Blue Carroll contends that although the Sulha was rooted in the traditional process, adjustments were made to tailor the system to the specificities of the situation and to 'accommodate the challenges to reconciliation that the wave of sectarian killing had created (2011:24). And finally, although tribal law had minimal influence in the new Iraqi legal system, Blue Carroll argues that her research

demonstrated widespread support among Iraqi officials for the deployment of tribal dispute resolution to promote reconciliation (2011:27). The following section will critically analyse key aspects of Blue Carroll's research and unpack the implications of her argument for the research at hand.

5.3.2 Tribe as an anchor

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Blue Carroll's argument is her divergence from Montgomery McFate's position on the relationship between tribe and violence. As we have discussed briefly in the introduction to this chapter, McFate's work which provided the foundation for the HTS made clear her belief that tribe and Iraqi tribal structures were a source of violence and instability in the region. For McFate, tribe was the single most important explanatory factor in understanding the motivation behind insurgent violence and she suggested that 'the tribal insurgency is a direct result of our misunderstanding the Iraqi culture' (2005b:34). McFate believed that tribe not only accounted for the impulse toward violence, but also the form that violence would take. According to McFate the very structure and organisation of the insurgency was 'not military, but tribal' (2005a:24). She believed that patterns of insurgent violence could and should be understood in terms of traditional patterns of tribal warfare. I have previously theorised this in terms of a conceptual association between tribe and violence which serves to locate violence at the level of culture and tradition. This is made explicitly clear when McFate comments:

> Assuming that non-Western terrorist organisations will act in a manner that tracks European Enlightenment notions of rationality will result in failure, since terrorist groups have their own culturally determined concepts of rationality. In fact, we are dealing in most instances with very ancient societies and thus with firmly embedded cultural patterns that prescribe and proscribe thought and action (2005b:18).

While Western behaviour is determined by Enlightenment rationality, the actions of 'non-Western terrorists' are determined by firmly embedded cultural patterns. In the case of Iraq these cultural patterns would clearly refer to traditional tribal structures. This assumption was a key component of the argument for the establishment of HTS. Culture and tradition – as embodied in the structure of the tribe – were the primary drivers of

violence in Iraq. A binary dichotomy emerges which constructs the West as peaceful, Enlightened and rational, in direct opposition to a violent, tribal Other.

Blue Carroll's approach to the relationship between tribe and violence and instability stands in direct opposition to that of McFate. While McFate sees the tribe as a source and driver of violence, instability and insurgency, Blue Carroll views it as antithetical to these phenomena. This mirrors the logic which informed the co-optation and recruitment of tribal militias and local police forces to combat insurgency in Afghanistan that have been critically interrogated by geographer Oliver Belcher. Belcher explained how, in contrast to McFate, many military analysts had conceptualized the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq as 'mutable, transnational, and contingent complex adaptive systems' (Belcher 2013:59; Kilcullen 2003). Within this frame, Belcher argues that:

> tribal militias come to be viewed (and constituted) as a proper antidote because of their timeless, local, simple, and cultural character, with the "tribal" taken to properly mirror the authentic "indigenous essence" of Afghan society (2013:75).

For Blue Carroll, traditional tribal dispute resolution mechanisms could serve as antidote to the enmity generated by sectarian conflict for precisely the same reasons. The extreme sectarian violence in Baghdad bore many of the hallmarks of the mutable, contingent, evolving network-based violence found in Kilcullen's analysis of the insurgency. This interpretation saw violence not as a product of 'firmly embedded patterns of behaviour' (McFate 2005b:18), but rather as a consequence of fracture, instability and disruption. When faced with the fallout from the anonymous, widespread and complex identity-driven killing (Blue Carroll:2011:22), the tradition of the sulha had potential to serve as an anchor in the storm.

Blue Carroll's research observed that as soon as a basic level of security was restored in Baghdad in early 2008, tribal sheiks were involved in 'a frenzy of dispute resolution' with tribal law playing a key role 'in furthering reconciliation between Baghdad's Sunni and Shi'a communities' (2011:11). She describes how many subjects interviewed, both sheiks and non-sheiks alike, insisted that that tribal dispute resolution offered the best hope of reconciliation between the two communities. Her research suggested that this was:

> because tribalism is neither “political” nor “religious”, nor sectarian, the motivations held responsible for the frenzy of violence Iraqis had just been through. Iraq’s large tribes have both Sunni and Shi’a members. Iraqi tribes had never repudiated the rights of the Shi’a to Iraqi citizenship and had generally been angered by al-Qa’ida in Iraq’s terrorist attacks on Shi’a civilians (Blue Carroll 2011:22)

This quote perfectly captures the way in which tribe is positioned as a tonic to sectarian violence. Tribes are characterized as non-political in opposition to politically charged sectarian conflict. Interestingly, while much of Blue Carroll’s analysis of tribe as a solution echoes David Kilcullen’s distinction between networked insurgency and rooted tribal structures, this aspect of the argument represents an inversion of the dichotomy. For Kilcullen, the mutable, contingent and complex adaptive systems of the transnational insurgencies were inherently depoliticized in opposition to tribal structures which he conceived of as innately political. While describing insurgent networks in Iraq or Afghanistan as depoliticized appears tenuous at best, denying a political dimension to the sectarian violence in Baghdad would most certainly be untenable. Instead, Blue Carroll takes a line which accepts that the violence was political in nature and positions the tribe as a social unit which is fundamentally non-political. It seems clear that this denial of political agency to Iraq’s tribal structures would fail to stand up to the most basic level of critical interrogation, however its casual acceptance serves to bolster Blue Carrol’s case for the leveraging of tribe as an antidote to sectarian conflict.

The other causal element of the violence cited in the above quotation is religion; the violence in Baghdad between 2005-2007 is often simplistically depicted as crude sectarian conflict between the city’s Sunni and Shi’a populations. Once again recourse to tribal belonging is presented as a solution to the enmity generated by the violence insofar as tribes are conceived as neither religious nor sectarian in character. With many tribes having both Sunni and Shi’a members, tribal identity and traditional dispute reconciliation mechanisms offered some common ground. Amidst the complex field of political and religious fracture and difference, Blue Carroll believed that the rootedness of tribal belonging offered the potential to re-knit damaged and divided communities.

5.3.3 Tribal law, Collectivism and Heritage.

Blue Carroll demonstrates an awareness of the way in which past colonial discourses and practices in Iraq were rooted in crude characterisations of primitivism and communalism. She quotes Toby Dodge's analysis of the Tribal Disputes Act of 1916 – the act which formally acknowledged the jurisdiction of tribal law in specific rural areas – which he argues 'encapsulated the dominance of the romance of supposedly pre-modern collectivism through which many colonial officials saw Iraq' (Blue Carroll 2011:28, Dodge 2003:90). Blue Carroll follows this by stating that:

> This article is not meant to comment on the modernity of Iraqi society, to suggests that tribes are in some way inherently beneficial forms of social organization in the modern world, or to encourage a future role for tribal law in Iraq (2011:28).

This disclaimer seeks to distance her arguments for the utility of tribal dispute resolution mechanisms from a romanticised fetishization of pre-modern communalism, however the conclusions which follow raise problems for this claim. Blue Carroll concludes there are three main reasons the sulha process was an effective mechanism for reconciliation in Baghdad (2011:28). Firstly, she suggests that the type of reconciliation needed in the aftermath of sectarian violence was fundamentally communal in nature, and that tribal law provides for exactly this type of solution. Secondly, she argues that mechanisms of state justice, and, in particular, the court system, lacked the capacity and integrity to address the issues at hand, and as such, tribal processes were needed to fill the void left by inadequate state infrastructure. And finally, Blue Carroll suggests that the sulha provides a pathway to reconciliation that is both culturally acceptable and rooted in shared and common heritage. While arguments around tribal law filling the void left by the failures of the state legal system have interesting implications in terms of Blue Carroll's conception of the relationship between tribe and state, it is the first and third reasons which are most instructive in relation the possible romanticising of a pre-modern collectivism.

Blue Carroll sums up her argument regarding the communal dimension of sulha as follows:

> tribal law furthers communal reconciliation which was and is sorely needed. Iraqis feel that individuals who conducted sectarian killings are responsible for their actions, but Iraqi culture holds families and larger communities responsible for the good and bad behaviour of their members. Reconciliation must account for this, as the fasel [sulha], process does (2011:28).

She clearly posits that holding wider groups and communities responsible for the actions of individuals is a distinct identifiable feature of Iraqi culture. This reaffirms her view that the sulha process is a mechanism for preventing feuding 'in a culture requiring that honour be restored after a wrong through the taking of revenge against the perpetrator or his[sic] extended family' (2011:13). Despite her protestations to the contrary, Blue Carroll's arguments regarding the centrality of communal responsibility in Iraqi tribal law reflect the same lens of romantic premodern collectivism Dodge attributes to colonial officials a century earlier. Tribal law provides the perfect vehicle for communal reconciliation for Blue Carroll precisely because it reflects a distinctly collectivist cultural particularism. This places Blue Carroll's position completely in line with past logics of colonial domination which posited crude distinctions between native communalism and progressive western individualism.

Blue Carroll's third conclusion regarding the potential utility of the Sulha process is equally as instructive. She observes that:

> Finally and most importantly, the *fasel* process is designed to allow individuals to move forward after crime with the support of the community, and this is exactly what reconciliation requires. **For many Iraqis, the *fasel* process makes reconciliation culturally acceptable, and participation in the process is also a way that many Iraqis can again find a much-needed common ground in their own heritage** (2011:29 Emphasis Added).

Once again, we see the extent to which the arguments regarding the utility of tribal law echo the arguments for the recruitment of tribal militias in Afghanistan that were identified by Belcher. Blue Carroll conceives of tribe and tribal law as offering a fixed and rooted counterpoint to the rapidly shifting terrain of sectarian violence in Baghdad. Not only does the sulha offer mechanisms for reconciliation, but it enables reconciliation to occur in a

manner that is ‘culturally acceptable’. Amidst the fracture and division of identity driven killing, tribal belonging and tribal law are seen to offer Iraqis a common ground that is rooted in a shared common heritage. Unlike the complex and mutable field of sectarian militias and insurgent groups, the tribe represents an ancient and stable social form – an enduring and persistent remnant of a pre-modern collectivist past. By arguing for the utility of tribal law, Blue-Carroll is simultaneously reproducing a quintessentially colonial formulation of Iraqi society as essentially communal, whilst instrumentalising communalism as a strategy for pacification.

Whilst she is eager to disavow the colonial romanticisation of pre-modern, communal societal forms, she undoubtedly accepts many of its suppositions regarding the essential nature of the people of Iraq. However, returning to the opening quotation in the section, Blue Carroll states explicitly that it is not her intention:

> to suggest that tribes are in some way inherently beneficial forms of social organization in the modern world, or to encourage a future role for tribal law in Iraq (2011:28).

This statement is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it reinforces the idea that communal modes of societal organisation designated as tribal are the anachronistic remnant of a past primitive stage of human history, and as such, exist outside of the ‘modern world.’ Secondly, she makes clear that, despite her arguments for its immediate utility, she does not envisage the incorporation of the mechanisms of tribal law into the structures of a new Iraqi state in the long term. This represents a cynical instrumentalization of the fasel process and the ‘traditional’ modes of social organisation it represents. This is made clear when she concludes:

> My goal here has simply been to illustrate that under the (I hope unique) conditions of Iraq in 2008-2009 (the need to deal with massive sectarian violence in the absence of an active state legal system), the fasel process allowed Baghdad's shaykhs to translate security into some form of reconciliation… Developing an effective state legal system in Iraq is essential, but it is a task that will take many decades to accomplish. In the meantime, reconciliation and some form of justice must be ongoing. At this point in Iraqi history, the fasel process is contributing to both (Blue Carroll 2011:68).

Within this frame tribal law is not presented as an alternative to state structures, rather it represents a stop gap measure which can provide the stability and reconciliation necessary to facilitate the development of the structures of an appropriately modern (i.e., liberal democratic) state in the long term. This represents an interesting variation of a liberal teleology of progress – one in which features of primitive social forms can be leveraged on a social evolutionary path toward the development of a liberal democratic state.

Blue Carroll's instrumental application of the lens of communalism is particularly significant in relation to Oliver Belcher's assertion that counterinsurgency stands apart from the wider regime of Liberal Interventionism on account of its fundamentally illiberal deployment of communalism as a technology. Belcher theorises this in relation to the formation of tribal militias in Afghanistan, which we have already identified followed very similar logic to Blue Carroll's arguments regarding the deployment of tribal law. Belcher observes that while Liberal Interventionism:

> seeks to remake failed or state-less voids into market and rights-based regimes based on its own humanitarian image [and] is a universalizing project, utilizing civilizational discourses loosely based on a Kantian cosmopolitanism practice…. counterinsurgency is a project of conservation and order, not civilization and progress. In counterinsurgencies, liberalism is the guiding light for "us," while "tradition" and stasis better suits "them" (Gregory, 2010, Belcher 2013:74).

Thus, Belcher concludes that the leveraging of aspects of so called 'communalism' is fundamentally illiberal insofar as it diverges from liberal universalising discourses with its recognition distinctions between Western progress and native tradition. Belcher's argument will be examined in detail in a later chapter, however for now it is sufficient to note that Blue Carroll's view of tribal law as a tool poses problems for this analysis. Whilst Blue Carroll does indeed reproduce the above binary distinction between us and them, she does not propose it as the basis for a project of conservation. On the contrary, she suggests that the value of understanding the specificities of native, communal identities lies in their deployment as a short-term tool to address specific problems which are impeding the development of a market-based liberal state. In this frame,

counterinsurgency is not a project of conservation, and these seemingly 'illiberal' practices are not opposed to aims of liberal intervention, rather they are mechanisms for its realisation.

5.4 Tribal Governance Mechanisms

5.4.1 Voices of the Mada'in

Another highly illustrative example of the instrumental deployment of the tribe concept in HTS research in Iraq can be found in a 2010 article published in Cambridge Review of International Affairs entitled 'Preliminary results from voices of the Mada'in: a tribal history and study of one of Baghdad's six rural districts' (Silverman 2010). The article was written by social scientist and HTT team leader Adam Silverman, and provides an overview of a field study conducted by HTT Iraq 6 into the nature of tribal society in the Mada'in Qada – a rural region of Baghdad province. The 4-month study involved a dual methodology combining formal interviews with over 40 tribal leaders and participant observation in what Silverman describes as an 'oral tribal study and social history project' of the region (Silverman 2010:223). Silverman explains:

> Conducting the study also allowed us to get a much more robust picture of the relational dynamics within and between tribes in terms of elites, notables and the overall religious dynamic and how governance and rule of law were really operating in our OE. Finally, we were able to drill down into the local behavioural drivers through being told why and how things were occurring from before US forces arrived in the area through to the time of the study (Silverman 2010:225).

Silverman is suggesting here that deciphering local tribal dynamics is key to understanding 'local behavioural drivers.' This conceptualisation of the role of tribe as a driver of behaviour is highly significant in light of the various iterations of the culture concept explored in earlier chapters. This resonates strongly with the approach of Montgomery McFate which views the behaviour of the people of Iraq as ultimately determined by their culture (Dunne 2013:44). This presupposes a crude, old anthropological approach to culture, and serves to reproduce a binary dichotomy between the rational, pragmatic Westerner and a culture-bound, impulse driven Other.

Silverman's overview of the HTT Iraq 6 study is also deeply salient in the context of Katherine Blue Carrol's instrumentalization of tribe examined in the previous section.

Silverman's arguments regarding the potential to leverage the Iraqi tribe in support of US military and political objectives of counterinsurgency, stability operations, and nation-building, closely mirror those put forward by Katherine Blue Carrol. Indeed, one of the central thematic conclusions of the Mada'in study reads as an almost direct reproduction of Blue Carrol's case for the utility of traditional tribal dispute resolution mechanisms in facilitating stability amid the complex web of conflict which plagued the new Iraqi state. Silverman suggests that there was no real process of reconciliation in Iraq in the aftermath of the conflict, and the failure to do so stems from the re-imposition of the Baathist state legal system to the exclusion of traditional tribal courts (Silverman 2010:229.) According to Silverman:

> Every sheikh we interviewed described the tribal courts and the inter-tribal mediation systems as a basically restorative and re-integrative justice system… the Iraqi rule of law system, again taken from the Saddam era, scrubbed clean and then re-imposed, is a prosecutorial investigative system. Judges investigate offences and by the time the case comes before the court, guilt has been established; all that is left to do is determine the amount of culpability and the punishment. Here too we had an indigenous (tribal) system we could have built upon (Silverman 2010:229:230).

However, again in line with Blue Carrol's observations, Silverman contends that the study shows how ordinary Iraqis continued to make use of the tribal justice system, despite the failure to incorporate these mechanisms into the official state structures. He observes:

> An interesting finding to note is that the tribal courts are involved in large-scale dispute resolutions as ordinary Iraqi are afraid to use the official rule of law system. The official courts are perceived as corrupt and biased, as are various portions of the Iraqi Security Forces. Moreover, many procedures require travel to the central court in Baghdad, a trip that many Iraqis are unwilling or unable to make (Silverman 2010:230).

Indigenous courts are presented as an alternative justice system operating in parallel to the justice system of the newly constituted Iraqi state. Silverman describes a practical example of a tribal mediation session witnessed by his research team during the project. The case involved a 'tribal dispute' regarding the murder of a man in a shooting. Instead of taking the issue to the state authorities, the relatives of the victim brought the case to the local leader of the Sons of Iraq, who Silverman describes as 'not a Sheikh per se' but the 'most senior person in the Dinanawi sub-tribe of the Musawi tribe' (Silverman 2010:230). According to Silverman, the mediator delivered a verdict of not-guilty due to the lack of an eyewitness – a criteria which is a necessary condition to determine guilt under tribal law – and the result was accepted as legitimate by all parties. Silverman contends that:

> In this instance the meditative and restorative aspects of the tribal law were successfully used to resolve a dispute that threatened to lead to more violence – violence that might have spread beyond this specific tribe (Silverman 2010:230).

It is unclear how this case demonstrates the uniquely 'meditative and restorative' characteristics of tribal law, but regardless, Silverman is arguing that the legitimacy of tribal legal codes, and deference to the authority of the mediator, facilitated a resolution to the dispute that was accepted by all parties. Silverman, like Blue Carrol, believes that the unique features of tribal dispute resolution mechanisms – their rootedness in the tribal culture of Iraq and their particularly restorative function – made them an ideal tool to be leveraged by the US military and civilian authorities to ameliorate the violence threatening the integrity of the nascent Iraqi state.

5.4.2 The Enduring Tribe

In keeping with the underlying assumptions regarding tribe which informed the very foundation of the HTS, exemplified in the work of McFate, Silverman's analysis is predicated upon an understanding of tribal being as an enduring, foundational feature of an essential Iraqi identity. This is illustrated – as so often is the case – through the lens of an urban/rural divide in which the urban centre, subject to the modernising influences of the state, globalisation and cosmopolitanism, is juxtaposed with a stagnant rural

periphery, which, insulated from the wider world, preserves a more authentic, primordial representation of an essential Iraqi identity. This is made clear in Silverman's description of the logic which informed the tribal focus of the study:

> The Mada'in History project, which was conducted in an area that like much of Iraq is much less urban and much less cosmopolitan than what can be found in the city of Baghdad, and the small handful of other large cities, focused on tribes because tribal identity is much more important outside of these urban areas. Moreover, given the unsettled nature of Iraqi life as a result of the invasion, occupation and reconstruction, it is not surprising that tribal identity would become more important. As Swidler (1986) demonstrated, during unsettled times people return to their group identities as a survival and coping mechanism (Silverman 2010:227).

The importance of tribal identity and tribal structures to rural life in Iraq is the central truism underwriting the entire focus of the study. Furthermore, this quote captures Silverman's understanding of tribe as a latent foundational identity in Iraq which has reasserted itself amidst the fracture of the war and its aftermath. The notion that people will 'return to their group identities as a survival and coping mechanism' presupposes a latent underlying collectivist form, which - although often supressed by the modernising individualism associated with the emergence of the contemporary nation-state – remains intact below the surface as an innate indigenous essence. As far back as the 19th century, colonial logics – as previously considered in the work of Mahmood Mamdani – have conceptualised so-called 'native' identities as fundamentally communal, in opposition to a universal, Enlightenment individualism at the heart of identity in the West.

For Silverman, the most significant finding of the study was the hostility of tribal leaders and tribal membership towards the nascent Iraqi state and the central government. There was a widespread perception that the central government lacked legitimacy and control, and for Silverman, this was a direct result of the failure to adequately account for tribal identity in the new governance structures. He observes that:

> According to our discussion with the tribal leadership, both Sunni and Shi'a… the Iraqi state is not penetrating very far at all, is not viewed as

> representative – even by the Shi'a – and the members of it are viewed as either Iranian agents or Iranians – even by the Shi'a… With the exceptions of a small number of more rural Shi'a sheikhs, every sheikh made the same declaration. These remarks were also echoed by the local Iraqis we interacted with during a variety of participant observations. At no time did any tribal leader, or other local we have spoken with, express any problems of legitimacy with the local government in the qada – either the qada council of the nahia councils. The dissatisfaction was solely directed at the national government in Baghdad (Silverman 2010:230).

In contrast to the views embodied by McFate, Silverman and Blue Caroll, the architects of the new consociational constitution did not view the tribe as the central organising principal of Iraqi society. The new state structure reflected an analysis which placed ethno-sectarian division at the heart of its understanding of identity in Iraq. The federal structure sought to reconcile and represent the competing interests of groups including the Shi'a, the Sunnis, the Kurds, the Turkmen etc. There is a clear break between this logic of state-building efforts, and the tribal orientation of the Human Terrain System which informed and justified the program's creation. Silverman argues that the findings of the study in the Mada'in Qada support the tribal focus of the HTS, and demonstrate how the failures of the new central government can be directly traced back to a misplaced emphasis upon ethno-sectarian identity. He comments:

> This type of information reconfirmed what we had learned prior to deployment: every tribe in Iraq has both Sunni and Shi'a members and religion is tightly entwined with tribal life. When asked, about two-thirds of tribal leaders clearly described the 'sectarian' conflict as being about resources. The remainder asserted that outside religious extremist influence (both Wahabbiya and Shi'a) is to blame. While we are confident about this finding, that the inter-communal disputes are resource driven rather than religious disagreements, theology and dogma are used as a cover for negative actions taken. This is no different from the attempts by elite entrepreneurs in the Balkans to justify ethnocide (to grab illicit trafficking networks as an expression of centuries-old disputes between religious subdivisions within the same

> ethno-linguistic and ethno-national communities (Silverman 2010:231-232).

There are two distinct dimensions to this argument. Firstly, Silverman is suggesting that the majority of conflict that is understood as sectarian in nature is not related to religious identity at all, and rather reflects materialist conflict around resource allocation. Secondly, and perhaps more interestingly for our purposes, he suggests that the study has found that Iraqis believe that where conflict is genuinely driven by sectarianism, this is not a consequence of pre-existing, indigenous dynamics related to religious identity, but rather derives from the nefarious infiltration of external religious extremism. This echoes Belcher's analysis of the logic which informed the U.S backed recruitment of tribal militias, and mirrors Blue Carrol's argument regarding the utility of tribal dispute mechanisms in the resolution of sectarian conflict. Sectarian violence is painted as antithetical to an authentic, indigenous Iraqi essence. Religious extremism is a foreign phenomenon – one that is imported into Iraq by outside agitators seeking to capitalise on the chaos resulting from the war. For Silverman, in precisely the same way as for Blue Carroll, tribe offered a ready solution to sectarianism – a rooted and authentic indigenous essence which would provide stability amidst the fracture of religious division driven by exogenous and alien forces. Once again, the tribe is presented as a unitary force which cuts across ethnic and religious lines. Silverman comments that:

> Virtually every sheikh told us that, even if all the tribal members in Mada'in are Sunni or Shi'a, there are tribal members in other parts of Iraq who are from the opposite sect. Moreover, every sheikh indicated that their tribe's people inter-marry with members of other local tribes regardless of sectarian orientation. For instance, Sheikh Qais indicated that both his mother and sister-in-law are from the Utbi tribe, which is Shi'a. Additionally, Sheikh al Jaffary described to us how he was welcomed back into the Sunni neighbourhood where he used to live even though he is Shi'a (Silverman 2010:231).

Iraqi tribe is presented as a ready-made indigenous antidote to ethno-sectarian division and conflict.

5.4.3 Tribal Governance Mechanisms

For Silverman, the failure to incorporate aspects of traditional tribal governance into the structure of the new Iraqi state was potentially disastrous. He explains that:

> The lack of tethering… of governmental structures to the most powerful socio-cultural dynamic in Iraq, the tribal system, is worrying. The concern is that unless the population layer that is tribally orientated is fully activated and brought into the mix, the hard work, grounded in the COIN reality of empowering the lowest levels of moving mounted and working dismounted will fail. The tribes have survived for a very long time. They survived Sadam, Bakr, the monarchy, the British, the Ottomans and others. Moreover, the tribal kinship system, and its ability to recognize, negotiate and survive even the subtlest shifts in power is what has enabled the survival of what we know today as the Iraqi people (Silverman 2010:234).

Once again tribe is presented as an ancient and enduring feature of Iraqi society. This 'most powerful socio-cultural dynamic' is not only the persistent essential characteristic which defines the Iraqi people as a stable and coherent category, but also, according to Silverman, possesses the distinctive properties which have enabled the Iraqi people's very survival. One such property which, according to Silverman, made the Iraqi tribal system particularly suitable to be incorporated into a new democratic state structure was its 'covenantal' orientation. He cites democratization literature, which in the tradition of Weberian development theory, suggests that a 'covenantal' tradition is an essential pre-requisite for a society to fully democratize (Silverman 2010:228). Silverman argues that, unlike many tribal societies, the Iraqi tribal system was a prime example of such a covenantal tradition. He contends:

> Many of the sheikhs, especially the more literate ones, refer to the tribal law as codes, covenants and/or constitutions…It is further bolstered by both Arab and Islamic understandings of leadership as being conducted on behalf of those led as a social contract (Silverman 2010:228).

Interestingly, Silverman presents this notion of a codified system of tribal law without any further explication or interrogation. He appears to consider this as an inherent particularity of Iraqi tribe, and there is no recognition of the extent to which the formalisation and codification of Iraqi tribal law was a product of British colonial interventions of the early 20th century. Regardless, Silverman believes that social contract dynamics at the heart of the Iraqi tribal system make it ideal to be leveraged for the purposes of democratization. He illustrates his case with reference to a practical example of the social contract dynamic of tribe in action. He refers to an example of tribal resistance to the insurgency which took place before the arrival US troops to Mada'in Silverman 2010:229) Led by Sheikh Qais – a member of the Jabouri tribe in the region – a tribal resistance was organised to resist both Sunni and Shi'a insurgents in the region. This small tribal 'Awakening' was massively successful according to Silverman, and eventually led to a partnership with the US army and the 'development of the SOI [Sons of Iraq] in the area' (Silverman 2010:229). He directly attributes this success to the leveraging of social contract dynamics. He explains:

> They and their Sunni and Shi'a allies from the other tribes were able to accomplish this because of the social contract and leadership dynamic. By taking risks that paid off on behalf of their tribal relations, Qais, Jablowi and their allies all validated their leadership positions within their tribes (Silverman 2010:229).

Qais and his allies leveraged their centralised tribal authority to take definitive action against the insurgents who threatened the safety of other members of the tribe and the stability of region. In doing so, they fulfilled the leadership role required of them by the social contract inherent in tribal organisation, which in turn cemented and validated their position as leaders. Silverman is arguing that the presence of this social contract dynamic was clear evidence that the incorporation of the tribal system into the nascent state structures could be effective. However, he explains that:

> The Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA] ignored the reality of this strong, hierarchical leadership and communal dynamic and its potential for socio-political organization in 2004, and this led to several lost years in Iraq (Silverman 2010:229).

According to Silverman, only one figure within the CPA advocated for the incorporation of tribal governance structures into the fabric of the new state - Lieutenant General Jay Garner. Silverman concludes that the findings of the Mada'in study vindicate Garner's position, which was widely rejected by others in the CPA. He explains:

> The primary assessment of these data is that General Garner's intended approach of going to the tribes and building the new Iraqi soci-political system on them was correct. As we understand it, General Garner's intention was to go to the major existing and functional social institution in Iraqi society in the aftermath of the removal of the one-party state (Silverman 2010:229).

Instead, Garner was marginalised and ultimately replaced, and instead of using the tribal system as the foundation of a new Iraqi state, the CPA 'took the government and structures that existed under Sadam Hussein, scrubbed them of personnel the US found objectionable (de-Baathification), restaffed them, and re-imposed the system on Iraq (Silverman 2010:229). This suggests that, despite a newly configured consociational, federal arrangement reflecting the presumed ethno-sectarian configuration of Iraq, the bones of the state apparatus was carried over from the past regime. Silverman continues:

> Once General Garner was replaced, no one asked the Iraqis what kind of government they wanted. Instead, the CPA took Saddam's government, and later his military, removed the folks they did not like (often using unfaithful and unreliable Iraqi allies to do this), but left the institutional structures in place and imposed them on the Iraqis. The Iraqis were then to hold an election in which the majority of parties and candidates were either exiles… with no indigenous base of support and partial or total alliances to non-Iraqi masters of movements (Iran and the Muslim brotherhood) or had an indigenous constituency that is interested in cessation from Iraq (the Kurdish parties, who also have operational ties to Iran) (Silverman 2010:233).

This passage captures the essence of Silverman's explanation for the lack of legitimacy of the central government in the eyes of the 'tribal' people of Mada'in. Instead of

incorporating popular, deeply rooted indigenous governance structures, the CPA disregarded the wishes of the people of Iraq and imposed a top-down structure which was not truly representative. Silverman's analysis reproduces the oft-recurring motif of the foreign, ideological infiltrators opposed to the genuine, authentic indigenous being. The majority of candidates are presented as having 'no indigenous base of support and partial or total alliances to non-Iraqi masters of movements.' Once again, the stable, indigenous tribal essence is juxtaposed with insidious, foreign ideological forces.

Silverman's proposed solution to the crisis of legitimacy identified in the study, and indeed the myriad problems the US military faced in terms of dealing with a persistent, stubborn insurgency, was straightforward. He argued for the incorporation of indigenous tribal governance structures into the very fabric of the Iraqi state. This is succinctly captured when Silverman explains:

> The key to successful counterinsurgency operations in Iraq, in order for synchronization of empowering the lowest and middle levels and linking it to structures of the highest, is that the opening created must be extended out to encompass the tribal system. If the tribally orientated population is not brought along, the connections between the lowest and highest will either miss each other or not hold – the tribal society is the necessary component to complete the transformation to a functional Iraq (Silverman 2010:234).

This argument conceives of tribal governance structures as the glue which can tie together disparate levels of Iraqi society. Tribe is the great unifier – an authentic, enduring constant of a true Iraq which can provide a concrete foundation for a stable, functional state. Once again, the overlap between Silverman's view of the role of tribal governance strongly echoes Blue Carroll's understanding of the instrumental potential of tribal dispute resolution mechanisms. In fact, in providing an example of potential features of tribal structures to be integrated into the state, Silverman suggests that:

> the tribal court and inter-tribal mediation systems, which are the key social reconciliation structures within Iraq, can be adapted and connected to both the government and the courts and used as the primary forum for the national socio-political reconciliation. Without this socio-cultural mediating component in place, the Iraqi government will

> continue to be viewed as unrepresentative and illegitimate (Silverman 2010:234).

Unlike Blue Carroll, who views the adoption of tribal dispute resolution as a stop gap measure – providing the short-term stability to enable the emergence of a truly modern Western style liberal state, Silverman gives no indication of an eventual transition to a fully post-tribal Iraq. In this regard Silverman's position mirrors the logic of scholars such as Roger McGinty and John Brewer, who Andrew Finlay describes as the 'liberal critics of Western intervention' (Finlay 2015). For Silverman, as for McGinty and Brewer, the incorporation of communal indigenous practices is not at all incongruent with the process of liberal state-building. In fact, it is a primary technology through which such projects can be realised.

5.5 Conclusion: The Segmentary, Hierarchical Tribe

5.5.1 Tribal law and Hierarchy

The arguments regarding the potential of Iraqi tribal law and governance considered in this chapter are predicated upon the belief that tribe is a central component of Iraqi social structure and identity. Silverman justifies the tribal focus of his HTT's research when he states:

> The focus on tribes, and specifically on tribal leaders, was the result of two research realities. The focus on tribes was driven by where we were in Iraq, as well as the reality of Iraqi life during the time of the study (Silverman 2010:227)

While Blue Carroll presents an overview of tribal law in Iraq, she does not engage in any form of granular description of her own image of the tribal structure of Iraqi society. Despite this, a close reading of her analysis reveals a very distinct picture of tribe in Iraq. As we have considered in an earlier section of this chapter, anthropologist Richard Tapper has challenged the way in which the tribe concept has been deployed by Western academics to describe societies in the Middle East. He observed how:

> The nature of indigenous concepts of tribe, whether explicit ideologies or implicit practical notions, has too often been obscured by the apparent desire of investigators (anthropologists, historians, and administrators) to establish a consistent and stable terminology for political groups. **Such investigators seem to believe that tribes are necessarily ordered in a hierarchical or segmentary system—with distinct terms referring to groups at separate levels—that can be translated, for example, as confederacy, tribe, clan, lineage, section, or whatever.** Unfortunately, Middle Eastern indigenous categories …. are no more specific than are English terms such as "family" or "group." Even in the most apparently consistent segmentary terminology, individual terms are ambiguous…. Most of the terms that have been translated as "tribe" contain such ambiguities, and attempts to give them—or tribe—precision as to either level, function, or essence are misdirected (1990: 55-56 emphasis added).

We have seen how Montgomery McFate's work underwriting the creation of HTS, despite some attempt to engage critically with the concept, ultimately settled upon a crude definition of tribe as 'a kinship system where patriarchal lineage is grouped agnatically' (2008:293) – thus projecting onto Iraq a mode of segmentary, hierarchical organisation captured by Tapper above. Roberto Gonzalez has written of the deleterious consequences of the adoption of such a model when he observes that:

> war planners generally assume that US military personnel are dealing with 'tribal' leaders embedded within clearly ranked hierarchical political systems in which 'sheiks' are in firm control of their subjects. This is a disastrous assumption because it excludes the ordinary 'tribesman' from the decision-making process and erroneously suggests that the 'sheiks' are entirely responsible for the actions of 'their' people. Consequently, the money for Sunni 'Awakening' and 'Sons of Iraq' groups is channelled exclusively through these leaders, reinforcing the 'tribal' model imposed upon them from above. In short, the hierarchical 'tribe' with highly concentrated leadership may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy (2009d:18).

Despite avoiding direct engagement with an analysis of the underlying structure of tribal society in Iraq, her description of the fasel process betrays an understanding of Iraqi tribe precisely in line with the critiques of Tapper and Gonzalez, and indeed the model adopted by McFate. In a rare allusion to the specificities of tribal form or structure, Blue Carroll declares that:

> mediators in the sulha process are most often tribal shaykhs. The hierarchy of shaykhs follows the tribal structure, with the most powerful shaykh being that of the qabila, or tribal confederation, followed by the shaykh of the 'ashira, or tribe, and then of the fakhd, a grouping of an unspecified number of family units (usually five) within the tribe (2011:13).

This description posits a clearly ordered hierarchical segmentary structure characterised by three distinctly identifiable levels – the confederation, the tribe and the fakhd. The levels represent a hierarchical distribution of authority with the confederation as the most powerful strata of the structure and the fakhd at the bottom of the pyramid. According to Blue Carroll, this distribution of power is reflected in the division of labour within the fasel process itself. She explains that shaykhs of confederacies are 'generally below direct participation in the process' although they will occasionally involve themselves if the need arises (Blue Carroll 2011:13). Low level disputes would usually be mediated by fakhd shaykhs, while:

> for serious problems, such as murder or disputes between two different tribes, a shaykh at the tribal level should be involved, since tribal shaykhs are more widely known and respected than fakhd shaykhs and are able to impose the outcome of negotiations on a larger group (Blue Carroll 2011:13).

While it is clear that the image of Iraq's tribal structure which informs Blue Carroll's understanding fits precisely with the type of crude, segmentary system which Tapper associates with misguided Western projections, perhaps most significant is the extent to which it assumes a ranked political system 'in which sheiks are in firm control of their subjects' (Gonzalez 2009d:18). Blue Carroll's examination of tribal dispute

mechanisms, and indeed her wider work in the field in Iraq, takes as a point of departure the immense concentration of political power in the hands of individual shaykhs throughout the various levels of the tribal structure. This assumption is even reflected in her research methodology; the article which outlines her case for the utility of tribal law and dispute reconciliation mechanisms draws upon '30 interviews conducted when the author was a member of a Human Terrain Team' (Blue Carroll 2011:11). While there are some references to interviews with a judge, historian, and 'Iraqi officials', it is clear from the text, citations and footnotes that the overwhelming majority of interviews were conducted with shaykhs themselves. Setting aside the obvious methodological issues raised by relying so heavily upon the testimony of the shaykhs to draw conclusions regarding their power to resolve sectarian disputes, this focus is demonstrative of the weight which Blue Carroll places in their authority – both in terms of their importance as sources of legitimate information regarding Iraqi tribal and social structures, and in terms of their position as figures of authority commanding substantial power. Indeed, the arguments put forward regarding the capacity of the fasel focus less on the specificities of the process itself as they do on the usefulness of leveraging the authority of the shaykhs. Throughout the article Blue Carroll identifies a clear correlation between fluctuations in the level of shaykhs power and the pervasiveness of the fasel process. She suggests that in the period 2004-2006, widespread violence and the displacement of tribal leaders meant that 'shakhly authority was at a low point' and as such, the fasel process had little to offer (Blue Carroll 2011:19). Similarly, she argues that the rise of the fasel process was a consequence of the restoration of such 'shaykhly authority.' She asserts that:

> The increase in fasels also reflected a more general growth in tribal identity and the influence of the shaykhs. In 2008, Iraqis were turning to shaykhs not only for dispute resolution but also for security, information, and resources (Blue Carroll 2011:21).

Her argument that the capacity of the fasel process to function as a mechanism for reconciliation is dependent upon the power of the shaykhs illustrates plainly Blue Carroll's understanding of tribal structure in terms of a 'clearly ranked hierarchical political system in which 'sheiks' are in firm control of their subjects' (Gonzalez 2009d:18).

5.5.2 Research Reachback Center: Hierarchical Tribe Laid Bare

While the assumption of a hierarchically ordered segmentary tribal system is evident throughout HTS research on Iraq, the most explicit elaboration of the HTS vision of tribal Iraq is contained in a 2008 report compiled by the HTS' Research Reachback Center [RRC]. As described in the introduction to this research, two RRCs were established in order to 'provide a link to a central research facility in the United States that draws on the government and academic sources to answer any cultural or ethnographic questions the commander or his staff might have' (Kipp et al 2006:13). The RRCs facilitated requests submitted by HTTs and HTATs on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide secondary research on various topics of interest to the HTTs or the units they served. In September 2008, the RRC received a request for research from HTT-AF2 stationed in Afghanistan seeking information regarding the differences between Afghan tribal structure and the tribal structure in Iraq (Foust 2008:217). The team reasoned that many troops currently serving in Afghanistan had previously been deployed to Iraq, and as such were familiar with the strategies of tribal engagement adopted by the US there. Therefore, a direct comparison of Afghan and Iraqi tribal structures would enable them to advise troops as to which strategies deployed in Iraq were transferable to Afghanistan, and which approaches would not translate effectively (Foust 2008:217). The request asked the RRC to 'compare and contrast Iraqi tribal structure with Pashtun tribal structure', 'provide any Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) for "tribal engagement" that have been either successful or detrimental to US efforts in Iraq' and thus 'provide suggestions for TTPs that might prove successful if used in Afghanistan' (Foust 2008:217). While the purpose of the report is to provide information which would inform potential strategies of 'tribal engagement' in Afghanistan, it is the image that emerges of Iraqi tribe which is of particular interest in the context of this chapter. This report provides the most succinct and explicit outline of the structure of Iraqi tribal society found anywhere in HTS literature.

The RRC report provides a clear and definitive description of Iraqi tribe as comprising of a clearly defined, hierarchical, segmentary structure primarily rooted in patrilineal descent. The report states:

> Iraqi tribes are ordered hierarchies… Iraqi tribes are like most tribal societies in Southwest Asia: they tend to be patrilineal, hierarchical, and geographic… As explained by Evans-Pritchard, segmentary tribes consist of equal and opposing divisions "nested" within a division of higher level along the hierarchy… At each level in the hierarchy, individuals support closer kinsmen against threats from more distant lineages. In other words, there is a structural impetus to form closely related communities who defend their community against outsiders (Foust 2008:218).

This conceptualisation of the Iraqi tribe fits precisely with the 19th and 20th century generalised anthropological tribe concept – no longer in use within the discipline outside of a few remaining proponents of social evolutionist perspectives – which was most associated with British social anthropologists and functioned as a generalised schema for explaining the structure of supposedly 'primitive' non-state societies (Sneath 2016). The report even cites Evans-Pritchard – whose ethnographic work on the Neur people made a significant contribution to the formulation of this crude tribal model (Sneath 2016). There is a striking overlap between the above description of the Iraqi tribe from the RRC report, and Sneath's description of this old tribe concept:

> as a general model for non-state tribal societies in which the branching segments of a unilineal genealogy formed political and territorial units, composed of the descendants of common ancestors. These grouped together on the basis of their genealogical distance to create successively larger political unit (Sneath 2016).

The report goes on to expand upon the structures of tribal governance by citing a monograph produced by former US Army Major William McCallister (2007) based on his experience in the field in Iraq. The report reads:

> In his primer, "COIN and Irregular Warfare in a Tribal Society," McCallister describes the structure of tribal governance in a general sense. It is broken into classes, with a defined hierarchy, with generally clear roles for sheikhs and their subordinates with legitimacy based on lineage. Sheikhs can organize into Shuras, which are "all consultative

> bodies organized to bring tribal leaders and representatives together (Foust 2008:218, McCallister 2007).

The report then continues:

> Most of Iraq's population can be traced into 150 tribes. These tribes tend to have a hierarchical structure with noble lineages and a stratification of sub-clans. In essence, it is a corporate structure, with influence flowing down the hierarchy (Foust 2008:219).

Once again, this offers us a precise description of the particular features ascribed to Iraqi tribal society by HTS. The RRCs were designed with a view to providing expert secondary source analysis to teams in the field, however the example of the work contained in this report raises serious question marks regarding the standard of scholarship involved in this process. The sourcing for the information regarding Iraqi tribal structure contained in the previous two extracts is a perfect case in point. Firstly, the description of the structure of tribal governance citing William McCallister does not derive from a peer-reviewed study, or any form of published academic or expert research. McCallister's monograph is a self-published pamphlet which contains five references across its 70 pages, and its depictions of Iraq tribe appear based purely on the anecdotal experience of the author who has no formal social scientific background or academic training. The claim contained in the following extract which makes the claim that most of the Iraqi population can be traced into 150 tribes cites a journalistic article from the Wall Street Journal as its source. This seems at odds with the HTS mission to provide accurate cultural knowledge which is rooted in rigorous research and academic expertise.

Having outlined the characteristics of Iraqi tribal society, the report goes on to explain the implications of this structure for strategies of military engagement and counterinsurgency in Iraq. It explains:

> The segmentary and hierarchical nature of Iraqi tribes also makes engagement relatively straightforward, in theory. Each tribe has a defined set of sub-tribes, and these can be mapped fairly definitively given the time and resources. There are certain key players at each

> level of hierarchy with whom to establish relationships, and these key players carry an enormous amount of influence—thus, engaging with the right leader at the right level can bring along that tribe, though not necessarily the subtribe (Foust 2008:219).

Perhaps the single most significant takeaway from the HTS vision of Iraqi tribe is its views regarding the identifiable concentration in the hands of individual leaders at each level of the tribal hierarchy. This mirrors the emphasis Blue Carroll places upon the figure of the Sheikh. This notion that tribal power was concentrated in the hands of individual leaders capable of exercising direct command and influence over their subordinates was the most important factor informing the adoption of the core approach to US military engagement with the Iraqi population - the strategy of Key Leader Engagement [KLE]. The significance of this will be discussed further in the conclusion of the thesis, but first – having explored the deployment of the tribe concept in HTS in Iraq, it is now necessary to examine the tribe concept and its function in the discourses of HTS in Afghanistan.

6. The Uninvention of Tribe: HTS and the tribe concept in Afghanistan

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has established the pervasiveness of the concept of tribe in the discourses from which the Human Terrain System emerged, and examined the role of the concept in the research conducted by the project in Iraq. Roberto Gonzalez has observed how:

> as military planners have recast the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as 'non-lethal' counter-insurgency struggles to win hearts and minds, the tribe has become both an analytical tool and a focal point for the wars' architects (Gonzalez 2009d:15).

Iraq was understood as a society characterised by a deep latent tribalism, and for Montgomery McFate – the intellectual architect of the project – tribe constituted the single most important element of local culture in the country (McFate 2005b:45). HTS research relied upon and reproduced an image of Iraqi tribe in terms of a traditional, segmentary system with a clearly defined hierarchical structure and concentrated central authority. We have seen research from HTT members extoling the potential to leverage mechanisms of traditional tribal dispute resolution to remedy sectarian conflict, and arguments regarding the utility of incorporating systems of tribal governance into the fabric of the new Iraqi state. However, the viewing of Iraq through a uniquely tribal lens was far from ubiquitous across the US military and political establishment. Despite McFate's insistence upon the centrality of tribe, the foregrounding of ethnic and sectarian understandings of the social and political fault lines of Iraqi society was far more prevalent in the corridors of power in Washington. Derek Gregory argues that the cultural turn in Iraq was characterised by an 'obsessive pre-occupation with ethno-sectarian division' (2008:37) and suggests that 'the Bush administration reactivated and institutionalized sectarian divisions in the political constitution of its 'new Iraq' (2008:43). This ethno-sectarian frame is enshrined in Article 3 of Iraq's new constitution, which declares it as 'a country of multiple nationalities, religions, and sects' (Republic of Iraq 2005) and is reflected in the consociational style federal governance mechanisms of the

new political system. Interestingly the concept of tribe is markedly absent from the document with the exception of one brief mention in article 44, which notes the state's commitment to the advancement of the country's clans and tribes, but also notes the explicit prohibition of any tribal traditions which are incompatible with Human Rights.

In the case of Afghanistan, however, prima facie assumptions regarding the nature of social structure among the American political and military establishment viewed the country through a distinctly tribal lens. Oliver Belcher comments that:

> Unlike Iraq, where social fault lines were largely determined by US and other Western officials as religious in nature, in Afghanistan it has been the tribe that has been identified as the basis for cultural legitimacy and social stability by the US military (Belcher 2013:71-72).

Based upon the data presented in the previous chapter, Belcher is perhaps underestimating the extent to which McFate, the HTS, and indeed the military made extensive use of the tribe concept in Iraq, albeit deployed alongside the lenses of ethnicity, religion and sectarian identity. His lack of engagement with the Human Terrain System in Afghanistan will be remedied in this chapter, however his contention regarding the centrality of tribe to military understandings of the country is supported by a significant body of evidence. Kathleen Reedy, an anthropologist who served as a social scientist with the HTS, has observed how:

> the military and governmental departments involved in Afghanistan remain enthralled by tribal maps. Non-Afghans (and sometimes Afghans themselves) are quick to blame disputes on "tribal" differences or age-old feuds. They expect that tribal maps and lists of tribal elders will help make it clear who makes decisions and how disputes are resolved (Reedy 2012:1).

The military's preoccupation with Afghanistan's tribes is perhaps best embodied by the 2009 monograph "One Tribe at a Time", written by special forces Major Jim Gant. In this piece Gant puts forward a strategy for engagement that involved embracing the supposedly tribal nature of Afghan society to defeat the insurgency and win the war "one

tribe at a time". In the introduction to the paper Gant asserts the significance of tribe in Afghanistan:

> we must work first and forever with the tribes, for they are the most important military, political and cultural unit in that country. The tribes are self-contained fighting units who will fight to the death for their tribal family's honor and respect (2009:4).

The document, which was subsequently published as a book in 2014 with the subtitle "The Paper That Changed the War in Afghanistan", received widespread attention and acclaim in US military circles. General David Petraeus – who had been appointed commander of US and ISAF forces in Afghanistan in 2010 – roundly praised both Gant and the monograph, proclaiming Gant "Lawrence of Afghanistan" and distributing the text to all his commanders on the ground in the country (Sisk 2014). It was even claimed that an annotated copy of the document was found following the killing of Osama Bin Laden by US forces in 2011(Thompson 2014). Although undoubtedly influential, Gant's argument merely re-enforced the turn toward the tribe that was already well underway among coalition forces in Afghanistan. Roberto Gonzalez has noted that as early as 2007, British Prime minister Gordon Brown was calling for the recruitment and mobilisation of traditional village militia and that understanding local tribal dynamics was essential in accomplishing this objective (Gonzalez 2009d:15). Gonzalez describes how Brown's calls were echoed by key American figures including Petraeus, and Defence Secretary Robert Gates, who similarly argued that working with the tribes was essential in order to defeat the Taliban (2009d:15). While the tribal lens was always central to US military and political understanding of Afghanistan, it was from 2007 onwards that the concept began to be operationalised as a technology of intervention and counterinsurgency. This signalled a departure from a security strategy which had previously been rooted in the expansion of centralised national security forces, and its replacement with an approach that emphasised the value of the traditional and the local. In Afghanistan, for the US and coalition military at least, the traditional and local was the tribe, and its mobilisation would come in the form of the enabling of tribal militias and local tribal police.

To explore the positioning of the tribe concept in the work of the HTS in Afghanistan this chapter will proceed as follows; the first section will explore the arming of tribal militias and the establishment of the Afghan National Police programme as

theorised in the work of Aziz Hakimi and Oliver Belcher. This will also consider the relationship between this approach and 19th century techniques of colonial governance we have considered previously through the work of Mahmood Mamdani. The next section will examine a category of research which introduces some potential problems with the tribal lens in Afghanistan, whilst retaining a fundamentally tribal understanding of the nature of social structure. This will look at the research of Dan Green which posits a distinction between Afghan tribal structure and the clearly ordered hierarchical tribes described in HTS research on Iraq, and also Clint Cooper's arguments regarding the problems posed for tribal engagement strategies by the absence of clearly defined central leadership structures. The following sections will then explore discourses which explicitly move away from tribe as a unit of analysis, and instead seek to put forward alternative, more operationalizable schemas for understanding society in Afghanistan. The first of these will centre around the work of Ron Holt and his arguments for the adoption of a frame of patron-client relations. The second will analyse an approach – most prominently articulated in the work of Kathleen Reedy - which can be broadly referred to as village-ism.

6.2 The Tribal Turn in Afghanistan: tribal militias and the ALP

By 2007, the inability of coalition forces to deal with the resurgent Taliban and an increasingly precarious political situation sparked a renewed interest in Afghanistan's tribes among military and political planners. Oliver Belcher observes how:

> After spending years disarming warlords and their militias, by late 2007 senior officers in the US military were approaching Afghan officials and Pashtun tribal elders to instead arm local community police (*arbakai*) and militias (*lashkar*) to fight the Taliban as a "stop gap" for the lack of US and Afghan government security forces in southern and eastern rural areas (Belcher 2013:72-73).

Initially, this turn towards the tribes was far from universally supported, particularly within the US military establishment. Earlier calls from Afghan President Karzai for the establishment of community police forces based upon the model of the traditional Arbakai were rejected by the US (Hakimi 2013:393). In fact, throughout 2007 and 2008, senior US military officials and commanders continued to publicly express their opposition to the 'potentially disastrous' strategy of arming tribal militias (Hakimi 2013:393). Up until this point the coalition strategy for the establishment of an indigenous Afghan security apparatus focused almost exclusively upon the development of the centralised state forces of the Afghan National Army [ANA] and the Afghan National Police [ANP] (Belcher 2013:72-73). This approach sought to counter Taliban influence by establishing the legitimacy of the new Afghan state, and expanding its power to provide security and stability to the periphery.

> That effort has been universally condemned as a disaster whose ineffectiveness produced such corrupt and abusive security forces that the Afghan army and police were seen as a major contributing factor in the Taliban resurgence in 2006 and 2007 (Guistozzi 2007:161-227, Belcher 2013:72-73).

As the failure of this approach became increasingly apparent, and the security situation in the country continued to deteriorate, 'the US military leaders appeared to have gradually changed their minds' and by the end of 2008 there was acceptance that the provision of security and countering the influence of the Taliban would require working with "the tribes" (Hakimi 2013:393). By the end of 2009, a 'full-scale effort to build tribal local defence forces' was underway in Pashtun regions of the country. Hakimi provides a narrative timeline of this process, with a particular focus upon the province of Wardak, where he charts the establishment of the Afghan Public Protection Programme [AP3] and the eventual formalisation of the state sanctioned Afghan Local Police [ALP] which sought to consolidate all existing local and tribal militias under the one banner (2013). He traces the development of the programme up until its dissolution in 2013 amid allegations of abduction, torture, and other abuses against civilians (Hakimi 2013:398). Before moving on to examine the role of tribe in the discourses of HTS in Afghanistan, it is first necessary to briefly consider the existing theorisation of the turn to tribal militias in the work of Hakimi and Belcher.

In line with much of my analysis thus far, the turn toward tribal militias as a counterbalance to the Taliban insurgency can be understood as the weaponisation of a particular understanding of local, native identity. Hakimi argues that the various tribal militia programmes were:

> the culmination of a series of attempts to tap into and rejuvenate what were presented as enduring rural traditions of self-protection…that were based upon an idealized and reified vision of the past (2013:389).

Within this frame "the tribe" is understood as the embodiment of an authentic and stable traditional native being, which, according to Belcher, is precisely why it came to be considered as a vital tool in the counterinsurgency effort. Belcher identifies the tendency within contemporary counterinsurgency discourses to conceptualise insurgencies as "overlapping transnational and local networks" (Belcher 2013:59). He comments that it is:

> because insurgent networks are conceptualized by military analysts as depoliticized, mutable, transnational, and contingent complex adaptive systems (Kilcullen, 2003), tribal militias come to be viewed (and constituted) as a proper antidote *because of* their timeless, local, simple, and cultural character, with the "tribal" taken to properly mirror the authentic "indigenous essence" of Afghan society (Belcher 2013:59).

He argues that tribal militias fulfil a dual role in the eyes of the US military, insofar as they simultaneously serve as a weapon against the Taliban and also as 'an alternative mode of social organization against the presumed "networked" form of an insurgency' (Belcher 2013:59). The opposition of the image of the transnational insurgency to the indigenousness of the Afghan tribe is particularly interesting, as will become apparent later. For now, it is sufficient to note that in line with Katherine Blue Carroll's representation of the role of tribe in Iraq, the military's view of the Afghan tribe positions it as a potential source of stability and peace against the backdrop of exogenous violence perpetrated by transnational actors embedded within non-indigenous social forms.

In the previous chapter, I have explicated the relationship between the cultural turn in US military policy in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the work of Mahmood Mamdani regarding the mobilisation of native identity - in particular the category of the tribe - in the 19th century mode of colonial governmentality known as indirect rule. In particular, this focused on the influence of the theories of native identity expounded in the work of Henry Maine. I will not re-tread previously covered ground here, however it does merit some brief consideration in this section, as Belcher's theorisation of the use of tribal militias in Afghanistan provides us with perhaps the most direct link between the contemporary deployment of the tribe concept and Maine's 19th century theories of nativism. Hakimi observes that:

> notions of the tribal traditions of local governance and self-defence have been invoked as part of the US counterinsurgency's tribal engagement strategy by selectively piggybacking on nineteenth-century colonial ethnography and the subsequent anthropological and historical accounts of Afghanistan (2013:388-389).

Exploring the re-animation and re-imagination of past practices of colonial domination can illuminate our understanding of the prosecution of contemporary projects of Western intervention – both explicitly military interventions and more apparently benign projects which take place under the banner of development or humanitarianism. Belcher succinctly captures one of the central justifications for undertaking this project when he comments:

> the analytical task is to ask how the multiplicity of techniques and modes of colonial governance – the ever-refining *technical* registers through which colonial officers divided and ruled occupied societies in the past – have persisted into the present (Belcher 2013:68).

Belcher suggests that the turn to tribal militias in Afghanistan can be directly linked to British colonial practices in the region, and in particular, identifies the influence of Robert Graves Sandeman, 'the nineteenth century British colonial administrator who famously innovated the colonial technique of arming "tribal militias" as a means to control villages along the Afghan and Pakistani frontiers' (Belcher 2013:80). It is pertinent, given the project at hand, that one of the earliest examples of the practical application of

Maine's ideas regarding the utility of leveraging native identity and local custom could be found in Afghanistan. Benjamin Hopkins and Magnus Marsden explain:

> By 'knowing the natives', Sir Robert [Sandeman] believed he could rule them though their 'tradition' – something more legitimate in the eyes of the tribesman and cheaper for the colonial state… Sir Robert recruited locals into state-sponsored militias to police themselves (Hopkins and Marsden 2011 quoted in Belcher 2013:80).

This demonstrates the extent to which the recruitment of tribal militias and the ALP programme from 2008 onwards constituted a re-animation of centuries old logics of colonial governance and domination. Implicit in this is the ascription of a timelessness to both tribe and native identity in Afghanistan. It implies that primitive peoples, in contrast to progressive European civilisation, are possessive of a transcendental indigenous essence embodied in their tradition and custom and resistant to change. Mamdani argues that it was through this logic colonialism brought into being one of the first modern fundamentalisms – 'the proposition that every colonised group had an original and pure tradition, whether religious or ethnic, and should return to that condition as a matter of course" (Mamdani 2012a). In the eyes of the US military, this original and pure tradition in Afghanistan – at least among the Pashtun regions of the South – was that of the tribe, and the establishment of the militias and the ALP was its weaponization. Hakimi, citing Mark Duffield, refers to this process as "getting savages to fight barbarians" (Duffield 2005: 141 quoted in Hakimi 2013:390). He comments:

> The savage is invited to maintain his traditional, self-reliant ways of life and the coherence and continuity of his community as a defence against the barbarians who threaten the civilised world as a whole (Hakimi 2013:390).

There are two further dimensions of these analyses which are noteworthy in the context of my consideration of the tribe concept in the work of HTS in Afghanistan. Firstly, both Hakimi and Belcher theorise the turn to the tribal in relation to wider debates in the field of liberal intervention, development and peacebuilding. For Hakimi, the shift toward the local and traditional to address the security situation in Afghanistan reflects wider trends in interventionist discourses. He argues that:

> The prominence given to customary institutions and non-state actors problematizes the dominant liberal notions of peace-building and state-building based upon state sovereignty and monopoly of violence (Hakimi 2013:390).

This resonates with the work of Andrew Finlay, in which he critically examines the contributions of social scientists such as John Brewer, Roger McGinty and Oliver Richmond, whom he describes as “critical interventionists” (Finlay 2015:1). The critical interventionists, according to Finlay, are not critical of intervention per se, but:

> merely worry that existing intervention tends to fail because it is top-heavy with ‘Western’ ideas of ‘good governance’ and lacks an ‘anthropological sensitivity’ to the communal nature of the local, indigenous identities and practices implicated in conflict (Finlay 2015:1).

Belcher suggests that this tendency represents a clear break between counterinsurgency and the overall project of liberal interventionism – the ultimate goal of which he views as the establishment of Western style liberal market style states at sites of intervention. He argues:

> Liberal interventionism and its attendant concern for “human security” is a universalizing project, utilizing civilizational discourses loosely based on a Kantian cosmopolitanism (e.g., Kaldor 1999, 2007). While counterinsurgency advocates may rhetorically echo these liberal sentiments in field manuals and popular writings (Sewall, 2006), in practice counterinsurgency is a project of conservation and order, not civilization and progress. In counterinsurgencies, liberalism is the guiding light for “us,” while “tradition” and stasis better suits “them” (Gregory, 2010). This is borne out in the unproblematic (from the view of the military) creation and utilization of “tribal” militias, a wholly illiberal technology of rule (Belcher 2013:74).

According to Belcher, the turn to tribe in Afghanistan, along with the cultural turn more broadly, is a fundamentally illiberal project of conservation which directly undermines the civilizing project of liberal interventionism. I argue that this is a misrepresentation of the relationship between the techniques and practices of indirect rule and the overall project of Western intervention. Far from being incongruent with the aims of liberal intervention, these seemingly 'illiberal' practices are mechanisms for their realisation.

Finally, Belcher identifies what he believes to be a central contradiction of the turn toward the tribe in Afghanistan. He suggests that although the tribal lens represents a way of knowing the local on behalf of the US military, the recruitment of tribal militias reflects a recognition that the Other can never be fully known or understood. He comments:

> The military way of knowing, I posit, is a paradoxical one, for while the "tribal nature" of Afghanistan is treated as a transparent "fact" by defense establishment analysts and commanders, access to that tribal nature is rendered opaque and *left to the tribal other* to "handle" and secure (Belcher 2013:73).

For Belcher, this represents a "martial relation" which is "forged out of disavowal" which posits a radical alterity of the native Other that is ultimately impenetrable to the Western gaze (Belcher 2013:73). However, while Belcher's genealogy of the US military discourses around the arming of tribal militias is undoubtedly valuable, there is one major aspect of the military socio-cultural knowledge infrastructure that is completely absent from his analysis – the Human Terrain System. How can we reconcile Belcher's argument that the military resigned itself to the opaqueness of the native Other, with the existence of a dedicated program within the military that's remit was to produce and provide precisely this sort of cultural knowledge? I am reminded of Derek Gregory's observation that the cultural turn:

> is a contradictory machine. For war, occupation and counterinsurgency are not coherent projects; they are fissured by competing demands and conflicting decisions, and they are worked out in different ways in different places (Gregory 2008:17).

Perhaps this provides a means to reconcile Belcher's theorisation with the existence of HTS, but regardless, there can be no thorough consideration of the US military's understanding of tribe in Afghanistan without exploring the discourses of the project established for the express purpose of understanding the cultural Other, and translating difference in such a way as to render it legible and operationalizable. With this in mind, the remainder of this chapter will examine the role of the tribe concept in the work of the Human Terrain System in Afghanistan.

6.3 The Uninvention of Tribe: HTS in Afghanistan

The salience of the tribe as a unit of analysis in Iraq and Afghanistan was central to the discourses from which the Human Terrain System emerged. A key dimension of Montgomery McFate's argument for the need for the project was anthropology's expertise as a 'discipline invented for warfighting in the tribal zone' (McFate2005a:43). Whilst the implication here is that McFate was in line with existing military understanding of the importance of the tribe in Afghanistan, it appears significant that she makes very little reference to the particularities of the Afghan situation in her work. The arguments for the establishment of HTS, particularly those around the tribe concept, were heavily focused on Iraq. Furthermore, McFate had written a number of papers and studies dealing with the specificities of Iraqi tribal structure, both in her work with the HTS and in projects involving private sector thinks tanks [see McFate 2008, MCFate et al. 2006]. The Afghan tribe was conspicuous in its absence. The data collection phase of this current project revealed an abundance of material related to the tribe concept among the research produced by HTS in Afghanistan. My clear expectation was that the analysis of this data would reveal – as with the data considered in the previous section in relation to Iraq – extensive arguments in favour of the importance of the concept of tribe to the understanding of native identity, and the utility of leveraging traditional tribal structures in the prosecution of counterinsurgency against the Taliban by restoring stability and order in peripheral areas which remained outside the reach of the new Afghan state. Furthermore, despite Belcher's exclusion of any material deriving from HTS, I firmly expected to find research which mirrored and complemented the ideas he explores which led to the US military turn towards tribal militias and the formation of the ALP. However, it quickly became evident that this was not to be the case; far from affirming the tribal lens adopted by the US military in Afghanistan, the overwhelming majority of discourses

emerging from HTS were in fact concerned with problematising the tribe concept, and challenging its utility for the realisation of US military objectives in Afghanistan.

6.4 Slight Departures from the Tribe

A useful entry point for the analysis of scepticism around the utility of the tribe concept in Afghanistan is a 2009 article by Dan Green published by the Small Wars Journal. Although Green was not a member of a Human Terrain Team and was not involved in the programme, he did serve in several different advisory roles with Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Tribal Engagement Teams in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the qualifications made in the article regarding the use of tribal militias merit consideration in relation to the more vigorous critiques put forward by HTS researchers which will follow. Written at the point where support from the adoption of tribal engagement was high within the US military, Green was in broad agreement with the principle of weaponizing tribal militias to deal with the Taliban insurgency. However, in this paper he outlines a number of concerns regarding the implementation of this strategy. Green warns that, while the arming of tribal militias in Anbar Province in Iraq provided evidence for the potential of a similar strategy in Afghanistan, the strategy must be informed by the lessons of the Iraqi experience as opposed to directly mirroring it. He argues for the adoption of a tailored approach which accounts for the particularity of tribal structures in Afghanistan.

> Any tribal-engagement strategy in Afghanistan that seeks to use the tribes against the insurgency must begin with an understanding of how the Afghan tribes are different from Iraqi tribes (Green 2009).

Whilst remaining committed to a firmly tribal lens, Green introduces the notion that tribes in Afghanistan are possessive of specific characteristics that distinguish them from a generalised understanding of “the tribe”. However, unlike some of the HTS research that will follow, Green does little to explain the specificity of this difference, or whether it is representative of essential structural difference between the tribes of Afghanistan and Iraq. He comments:

> Though Iraq's tribes were, to varying degrees, suppressed, co-opted, included and divided during Baathist rule, their structures remained largely intact… Many of Afghanistan's tribes have been systematically undermined by the Taliban, Pakistani intelligence and local warlords; perverted by the free flow of arms; and weakened by mass migrations of people. Leaders in power may not be the traditional tribal leaders, and some tribes have been so weakened that no single individual leads them. That situation complicates leader selection, legitimacy and efficacy and leads to conflict within and between tribes. (Green 2009).

There are two distinct aspects to consider in Green's argument here; firstly, he clearly identifies that the weakened state of tribal structures in Afghanistan, and particularly the lack of clearly identifiable and stable leadership, is the direct result of local socio-political history in the region. The second important assertion here is that this perversion of tribal structure that has resulted from these various processes has led to a situation whereby the traditional leadership of the tribes has been eroded and 'some tribes have been so weakened that no single individual leads them' (Green 2009). This statement is particularly significant insofar as it reveals the image Green has of the Afghan tribe prior to the intervention of recent history. Unlike much of the HTS research that will follow, Green's image of the traditional Afghan tribe is one of a clearly ranked hierarchical system with the concentration of authority with individual leaders exercising control over the tribal unit. In this way, Green views the differences between tribe in Iraq and Afghanistan as a contrivance of history, as opposed to the embodiment of distinctly differentiable essential characteristics.

For Green, the absence of genuine leaders and erosion of centralised leadership structures posed a challenge for the US tribal engagement strategy. As was the case in in Iraq, the weaponization of tribal structures prioritised key leader engagement as a mechanism for the co-option of tribes. Where such structures were absent, Green proposes a radical solution. He openly advocates for the undertaking of a process of social engineering with a view to remoulding and restructuring local tribal systems into a more easily operationalizable form. He argues:

> Because many tribes lack a unifying leader, a key aspect of a tribal-engagement strategy should be the convening of tribal security jirgas (a meeting of village elders) throughout a province, primarily

> orchestrated by the government of the Independent Republic of Afghanistan, or GIROA. The goal of the jirga is to introduce the strategy of empowering the tribes and to identify not only a leader who can marshal the tribe or village against the insurgents but to also select a security committee. The chief goals of the committee are to advise the leader; assist in the selection, vetting and support of lashgars (tribal militias); and create a pool of potential replacements for the leader if he is ineffective, corrupt or killed. These leaders would form the nucleus of a province-wide tribal force who would, in turn, select a provincial leader who could lead the tribes and take decisive action (in some cases, this may be an existing security official) (Green 2009).

This remarkable statement could, at least to some extent, be understood as Green saying the quiet part out loud. While Roberto Gonzalez has suggested that the channelling of funds through tribal sheiks may lead to a process of reification such that the 'hierarchical tribe with highly concentrated leadership may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy' (Gonzalez 2009d:18), Green is explicitly calling for the adoption of such a process as formal military policy in Afghanistan. Whilst much of the analysis in this chapter is focused upon various approaches to the weaponization of local, traditional social structures for the purposes of counterinsurgency, very few if any contain such brazen calls for the targeted, deliberate remaking of these structures to render them more useful to the military. That Green appears to consider this process as a restoration of a central leadership that was present in some idealised past prior to the erosion of Afghan tribal structures, his position would appear to fit with Belcher's assertion regarding counterinsurgency as an illiberal 'project of conservation and order, not civilisation and progress' (Belcher 2013:74). However, Green makes clear later in his argument that any programme targeted at the deployment of traditional tribal militias must contain inbuilt mechanisms to facilitate their later dissolution and incorporation into formal state structures. He suggests that the promise of state jobs could serve as both a tool for recruitment and as a mechanism for ensuring discipline:

> Each tribal member of the lashgar should be promised the opportunity to work for the ANP [Afghan National Police] or the ANA [Afghan National Army] is they perform their tasks well. The promise of future employment works as a check on bad behavior and will eventually serve as an employment magnet for military-age males who support

> the insurgency out of a need for income. Employment also provides a path for tribes to become legitimate members of the security force (Green 2009).

Green extends this logic even further to suggest that the embedding of Coalition soldiers would provide the opportunity for the transmission of Western values and the personal development of militia members.

> As our Soldiers live with the tribes, they will also have to undertake a mentoring program for the tribal lashgars, but their efforts shouldn't be confined to security training. They should also initiate a literacy and administrative-training program to better develop the abilities of the tribal members to manage their affairs. This kind of training will help tribes become better ANP members as the lashgars transition into official police forces (Green 2009).

Far from a process of conservation, Green views tribal militia programmes as a perfect vehicle for liberal development activities which would enable individuals and groups to 'better manage their affairs' and prepare them to better fulfil their future roles within the new Western style state structure.

The problems arising from the absence of clearly defined leadership structures are a frequent theme in the research of HTS in Afghanistan. In a 2011 article published in the Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin, Clint Cooper – a former Army intelligence officer serving on a Human Terrain Team in Kandahar – echoed Green's concerns regarding the difficulty identifying figures with real decision-making power in Pashtun tribal regions. Cooper argues:

> One of the most challenging aspects of getting anything done in Afghanistan, and in particular Pashtun areas, is trying to identify one individual who can make a decision and speak for the village as a whole… finding that one true powerbroker can be elusive. You might find a government appointed official, but if he is from another tribe or another area, he will rarely have the trust of the locals and may not have any more power than extends past his front porch (2011:101).

In response to this, Cooper explicates three traditional leadership roles that military personnel should be aware of when trying to understand local power dynamics: the Mulik, the Malik and the Mescheran. The Mulik is presented as the chief representative of a village – a relatively recent position created by the regime of King Zahir Shah. Cooper suggests that the position is now largely obsolete, with the exception of some situations where Muliks have retained power as a result of personal strength and character (Cooper 2011:101/102). The second position highlighted is that of the Malik, which Cooper describes as a position of power derived purely from wealth and material assets. As such Maliks are not considered to be truly representative of the interests of the people, however they can 'hold much power and at times get things done' (Cooper 2011:102). He does, however, caution against engagement with Maliks in situations where their wealth derives from corruption and criminal activity. The final leadership position Cooper discusses is that of the Mesheran, or village Elders. He suggests that Mesheran were the traditional source of power and authority in the village, and exercised power on a collective basis through the Jirga, or village council. He asserts that while elders typically retain the respect of their people, the power of tribal Jirgas has been widely eroded in recent times. Cooper recommends that units should be mindful of all three of these roles when attempting to ascertain where power currently lies in a village, however 'if in existence, using the Mesheran would be the preferred avenue of approach' (Cooper 2011:103). This is significant insofar as the Mesheran, unlike the other two positions which have emerged due to the influence of exogenous factors, is conceived of as a legitimate location of authority reflective of authentic and traditional tribal structures.

In a similar vein to Green, Cooper believes that the erosion of traditional tribal decision-making processes is a direct consequence of the impact of Afghanistan's recent history. He comments:

> To make things more frustrating, history has muddied the waters even further. You can blame the failed interaction with the Soviets, the Taliban, and even the U.S. Recent history has had a huge impact on this traditional Pashtun leadership structure…also, because of many decades of warfare, lack of security, and political vacuums, refugees coming back to Afghanistan or Iran may simply not have the traditional structures in place. As well, often more powerful and corrupt individuals

> have taken over their land and have completely ruined and pre-existing power structures (Cooper 2011:102-103).

Once again, we are presented with an image of idealised and stable tribal social configurations which have been distorted and undermined by the political upheavals of the past century. Mesheran and the village councils represent an enduring fragment of this idealised past, and it precisely the authenticity this confers which makes them the preferred figures of engagement. The argument diverges from Green's analysis here somewhat; where Green viewed the differences between tribes in Iraq and those in Afghanistan as a product of history as opposed to a reflection of substantive essential difference, his image of the idealised Afghan tribe was one where power was centrally concentrated in the hands of individual leaders capable of exercising effective control over others in the tribe. For Cooper, and as we will see in much of the HTS research to follow, the Afghan tribe was possessive of distinct essential characteristics which made it unique to the tribe of Iraq even prior to its distortion. Unlike the clearly defined individual hierarchy of tribes in Iraq, Cooper argues that Afghan tribal decision-making processes were far more collective and communal in nature. Within this frame, power was not located in the hands of any one individual leader, but rather exercised collectively by the jirga. Cooper explains:

> Traditionally, most rural Pashtuns have attempted to avoid contact with the state legal institutions and have preferred to make decisions and resolve conflicts by holding their own jirga (or shura). A jirga is a traditional political mechanism for solving disputes through a tribal council of elders and religious heads. It is strongly intertwined with the Pashtun tribal economy, social values and beliefs, politics and customary laws. A jirga is very communal and democratic in nature, having elders arrive at decisions through consensus (Cooper 2011:101).

This view is reflected in the Cooper's recommendations for engagement; he advised patrols to 'keep in mind that Afghans use a collective decision-making process', and that 'while it would be nice to have one "go to guy" in the village', this is unlikely to be the case in Pashtun areas (Cooper 2011:103).

Ultimately Cooper, like Green, is arguing that the absence of tangible, clearly identifiable leadership structures pose a problem for any strategy based upon tribal engagement in Afghanistan. However, this argument is located firmly within a frame that, firstly, accepts the primacy of the tribe as a unit of analysis for understanding Pashtun society, and secondly, relies heavily upon the distinctly old anthropological understanding of culture which was explored in Chapter Three. This can be seen in the generalised application of the tribal structure as representative of an authentic, homogenous Pashtun culture with clearly identifiable characteristics (albeit perverted by historical forces), but also in the pervasive ascription of trope-based character traits to the Afghan people in general. In one such example Cooper declares that:

> Afghans have been described as opportunists, but overall they are survivalists. They consider the implications of working with Americans today when the Taliban might be there tomorrow (Cooper 2011:102).

Later he declares that:

> As Americans, generally speaking, we trust an individual until that person proves that he is not to be trusted. In Afghanistan you are automatically not trusted until you can prove that you can be trusted (Cooper 2011:102).

This type of generalisation bears the hallmarks of the Boasian cultural anthropology of the 1930s and 1940s, exemplified in the work of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Meade, whose research involved ‘national character studies which reduced the complexities of other nations into simplified and often pseudo-psychological profiles’ (Price 2010:59). These crude, old anthropological approaches were rampant in the early discourses of the US military cultural turn in Iraq and Afghanistan from which the HTS would subsequently emerge. Despite this, however, within Cooper’s work can be seen the genesis of more sophisticated approaches to culture which will be examined later in the chapter. Based upon his elaboration of the typology of leadership in Afghan villages, Cooper does make some brief recommendations for patrols seeking to identify the location of power from village to village, however this falls far short Green’s ambitious proposals for the consolidation of power structures through a project of radical social engineering. In fact, Cooper actually acknowledges that pre-determined generalised

schema will have limited utility when applied to understanding Afghanistan. He comments:

> In the many training scenarios that we as soldiers receive before being deployed overseas we all want the correct answer after the training exercise is over. The truth is that a correct answer simply does not exist. It takes time to map these power structures to see what is in place and what is functioning. It can take days, weeks, and even months to figure out how best to use these alternate leaders to our advantage (Cooper 2011:103).

Here Cooper is accepting that the level of local variation renders the application of any generalised understanding of Pashtun power structures problematic, and acknowledges the need for a more granular, situationally specific approach. The significance of this comment, along with his emphasis upon the importance of locating power structures on a village-by-village basis, will become apparent as the chapter progresses.

6.5 Beyond the Tribe: alternative schemas and the weapons of the powerful.

While the HTS research emerging from Afghanistan frequently problematised the crude tribal understanding which informed the counterinsurgency of the late 2000s, a significant body of this work also concerned itself with the formulation of alternative, more useful schemas for understanding social organisation in the country. The first such approach we will examine is found in the work of Ron Holt, an anthropologist with significant field experience who served as a senior social scientist with the Human Terrain System in Salerno, Eastern Afghanistan. In a 2012 paper ‘Beyond the Tribe: Patron-Client Relations, Neopatrimonialism in Afghanistan’, Holt engages with existing anthropological literature and his own experience on the ground to expound his own particular critique of the tribe concept in Afghanistan. Holt observes that:

> In order to describe the social organization of much of the Middle East and Central Asia the broad term tribe has been widely used as an

> analytical tool. The term is often carelessly used and misapplied to situations where it is not applicable (Holt 2012:27).

Holt does acknowledge that tribe is indeed a significant feature of Afghan society, however he qualifies this by noting that:

> while the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan are often "tribally-organised" most of the rest of the country is not. And, in many Pashtun-dominated areas "tribes" have lost much of their power and meaning during the war with the Soviet Union, the Civil War and the era of Taliban rule. Tribal social **organization is just one factor, albeit important, amongst many** (Holt 2012:27 Emphasis Added).

Here Holt echoes the narrative of Green and Cooper in highlighting the role of recent political history in the erosion of Afghan tribal structures. He also problematises the fact that tribal structures are limited to Pashtun regions and as such tribal approaches to counterinsurgency would have limited generalisability to a national level model for engagement. Holt then draws upon existing scholarship from Oliver Roy and Richard Tapper to explicate the role of the term qawm in the misapplication of the tribe concept in Afghanistan. The Arabic term qawm is frequently directly translated as 'tribe', however the term has a much wider range of meanings. Holt comments that:

> Tribes are often used as a generic for any pre-state social organization whether they are segmentary lineages, political units, linguistic units, or geographic units. In Afghanistan the word qawm is often translated as tribe but qawm also means any communal group including clans, lineages, city guilds, networks grounded in the *tanzims*, and patronage networks (2012:24).

He directly cites Tapper's observations regarding the ambiguity of the concept and his suggestion that the innate flexibility of the term allows it to actively facilitate 'strategic manipulations of identity' (Tapper 1983:27). The suggestion here is that:

> The very plasticity of this form of mutating social organization allows for functions and structures to vary in the face of changing circumstances and challenges from the outside and inside the qawm (Holt 2012:28).

The significance of this view is twofold; firstly, whilst previous tribal approaches have been firmly reflective of old anthropological notions of fixed and bounded culture, Holt's elaboration of the qawm here is suggestive of approaches more in line with what Susan Wright would term "new meanings of culture" (Wright 1998). As we have established in chapter three, such new approaches – far more congruent with most contemporary anthropological approaches to the concept – view culture as an active process characterised by fluidity, malleability and flux. Throughout the work of the HTS there appears to be correlation between engagement with established academic work on Afghanistan and the prevalence of more developed approaches to the culture concept. However, as we will soon see with Holt's work, the spectre of old anthropological culture is never far from view. The second important dimension of this comment is the notion that the plasticity of these structures actually serves as an adaptive defence mechanism whereby Afghan communities actively manipulate identity structures as a means of resistance against outside challenges. This argument bears a remarkable resemblance to arguments made by various anarchist anthropologists in their study of interactions between non-state peoples and the state [e.g Scott 2009].

Holt concludes that:

> While tribal social organization is important in some areas of Afghanistan, and some have argued that our major focus in Afghanistan should be the tribe, in many cases this approach is difficult to operationalize (Holt 2012:27).

This observation cuts to the core of one of the major epistemological issues raised by this project. HTS was established to remedy the US military's cultural knowledge gap, but according to Montgomery McFate, it was not simply the absence of cultural knowledge that was the problem. McFate argued that the proliferation of inaccurate socio-cultural knowledge was equally – if not more – harmful to the realisation of US military objectives than a mere lack of knowledge of local culture (McFate 2005b). Thus,

HTS was intended as a mechanism for the provision of information that was both accurate and truly reflective of the nature of social structure in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, as captured in the above excerpt from Holt, and as we have seen throughout this project, what really mattered when it came to the various conceptual lenses applied to Afghanistan and Iraq was not the extent to which they truly reflected the nature of these societies, but rather, the extent to which the concepts could be operationalised in support of the achievement of US military objectives in the field. Whilst arguing for the limitations of the tribe concept in this regard, Holt proposed his own conceptual schema which he believed could 'bridge the gap between tribal and non-tribal approaches to the American efforts in Afghanistan (Holt 2012:27). He argues that:

> An alternative to seeing Afghan society though a tribal or non-tribal lens is patron-client relationships. This concept appears equally valid in tribal Pashtun areas and non-tribal Tajik areas, and one could argue for much of Islamic culture. Patron-client relations provide a simple heuristic that illuminates Afghan society for the policy-makers, soldiers and civilians engaged in policy and operations (Holt 2012:27).

Patron-client relations provide Holt with a unifying heuristic framework which transcends the tribal/non-tribal binary and serves as a generalisable conceptual structure which can be applied to Afghanistan as a whole. The use of the term heuristic here is particularly salient in light of the previous observations regarding the importance of operationalizability. It implies a non-optimal but pragmatic improvised solution based upon trial and error. Where the tribal lens proved inadequate, Holt concerns himself with the formulation of a more functional alternative.

While Holt accepts the persistence of tribe in Afghanistan, the impact of recent history, the variability of its form and structure, the fragmented nature of authority, and its limited geographical distribution render it unsuitable as the basis for a generalisable schema for local engagement. In its place, Holt argues that:

> An alternative way to see the reality on the ground in the Middle East and in Afghanistan is through the model of enduring dyadic "patron-client" relations or patrimonialism. Max Weber argued that as countries modernised their traditional patrimonial political organization would

> give way to bureaucratic rationalism. In the Islamic world we tend to see a hybrid of state bureaucracy and authoritarian paternalistic rule that Eisenstadt refers to as "neopatrimonialism." Neopatrimonialism means that patrons use state resources to secure the loyalty of clients (Holt 2012:28).

This model posits that it is relationships between patrons and clients, not tribal relations, that best capture the authentic, essential nature of society in Afghanistan, and the Islamic world more generally. Furthermore, Schmuel Eisenstadt's description of "neopatrimonialism" provides Holt with a convenient means to account for the influence of recent history here; neopatrimonialism represents the meeting of tradition and modernity. Unlike elsewhere (ie. the West), tradition was not displaced by bureaucratic rationalism as Weber would have predicted. Instead, the stickiness of patron-client relations enabled them to endure and adapt to the emergence of state structures. This engagement with Eisenstadt is significant insofar as it reflects the tendency of HTS researchers to dip into existing anthropological literature on Afghanistan in search of more useful and operationalizable theoretical frames. Holt goes on to argue that:

> Leaders within an Afghan tribal qawm traditionally extracted wealth from brigandage, road taxes and protection rackets and distributed these subsidies to their supporters. By controlling the flow of wealth and sometimes pasture allocation, they were able to influence their fellow tribesmen and increase their power and prestige. Today the richer tribal leaders serve as a nexus for many networks as they juggle inputs and resources from the Americans, non-governmental agencies, Afghan bureaucracies, the various Talibans and their clients. Tribal elders (masharon, rish sefi d, spin-zhirey, ag-sagal) may have some power as a council and some influence as individuals but they are often a product of the khan's success–emerging from the unity provided by successful leaders (Holt 2012:28)

Within this frame, patrons – embodied here by the figure of the Khan but who may hold one of various different titles – occupy positions of centralised power and authority derived from their control of the distribution and allocation of resources to their clients. This conveniently resolves the difficulties posed by the inconsistent, dispersed and often

collective distribution of tribal authority discussed by Green and Cooper, as it reconceptualises Afghan society in a much more clearly hierarchical distribution. This presents a situation much more akin to that described in Iraq, whereby clearly identifiable khans occupy positions of power – albeit derived from material relations as opposed to hereditary or custom based legitimacy – through which they can exercise control over their clients.

Patron-client relationships are relationships of mutual dependence and reciprocity between parties with an unequal distribution of power. According to Holt:

> Traditionally, the Shaykh, Khan or Malik are often landowners that are economically and politically powerful and they may have private armed retainers or access to a state's military power. The patron is expected to act as a conduit of largesse and as a negotiator for his client-group. They have social status whereas their clients are generally of humble origins and weak politically and economically. These relationships are often informal and flexible but sometimes they are contractual (Holt 2012:29).

The implications for engagement here are clear; as with so much of the research carried out by HTS, there is a pre-occupation with the necessity to identify key leaders with genuine actionable authority who can serve as powerbrokers to enable coalition forces to co-opt and leverage populations under their direct control. Green believed that such figures needed to be manufactured through social engineering, while Cooper argued that power was variably dispersed among different figures and needed to be identified on a village by village basis. For Holt, these figures were ready made, and this would be rendered obvious once the appropriate lens – that of the patron-client relation – was applied to the situation. In fact, according to Holt, the historical interaction between the state and local patrons, which bore remarkable resemblance to colonial logics of indirect rule, provided a ready-made blueprint to follow. He observes that:

> Tribal Khans in Afghanistan and Iran were often the conduit for state resources and used those resources for personal family gain but also extended the state's control and reach into areas [of] weak central government. Networks and connections matter more than higher

> official positions in these situations. Neopatrimonialism certainly undermines the official bureaucratic structures and the rule of law, but may be quite effective in the absence of either (Holt 2012:28).

Where patron-client relations cannot be replaced by the expansion of centralised state bureaucracy, the state can expand its power and control through the leveraging of existing patron-client relationships, and indeed, the creation of new ones. By channelling vast sums to Khans, Sheiks and Maliks in exchange for their support, the GOIRA and the coalition forces constitute new relations of mutual dependence and reciprocity with these figures, mirroring supposedly indigenous and authentic patterns of social relations and placing themselves at the top of a hierarchy of patronage.

As we have previously observed, Holt's engagement with Richard Tapper's work on the ambiguity of the term qawm, and his observations regarding the flexibility of Afghan tribal structures are suggestive of a move beyond the old anthropological notions of culture that have dominated the work we have considered thus far. Tribe is presented as a "form of mutating social organization" characterised by a plasticity and flexibility that resists generalised understandings and fixed formulations (Holt 2012:28). As such, Holt's view of tribe could be reasonably described as an active process – constantly making and remaking itself instrumentally and situationally. However, for Holt, it is precisely this instability which renders tribe difficult to operationalize for the purposes of counterinsurgency. In contrast, patron-client relations provide a stable, enduring and fixed schema for understanding the structure of Afghan social relations. While those occupying the position of patron and client may change over time, and are mediated by the specific state structure of a given moment, the fundamental patterns of relation remain reasonably fixed in Holt's view. This patron-client lens relies upon and reproduces all of the same essentialising, Orientalisms present in the cruder approaches to tribe thus far. Perhaps most significantly, the emphasis upon the specificity of Afghanistan is undermined. Holt considers patron-client relations as definitive of Islam, the Middle East and, indeed, "developing" societies more broadly. Holt asserts that patron-client relations are:

> An alternative way to see the reality on the ground in the Middle East and in Afghanistan… In the Islamic world we tend to see a hybrid of

> state bureaucracy and authoritarian paternalistic rule that Eisenstadt refers to as “neopatrimonialism” (Holt 2012:28).

Despite degrees of particularity, neopatrimonialism is considered sufficiently generalisable so as to reflect a model which can be applied across the Islamic world. Furthermore, Holt’s analysis adopts an explicitly social evolutionary frame within which these patronage-based systems of so-called “developing societies” are understood as a more primitive stage of development to Western, bureaucratic rationalism. While he suggests that Weber mistakenly assumed processes of modernisation would invariably dissolve patronage structures and replace them with technocratic, rationalist bureaucracy, this did not occur in the countries and regions in question, where patronage structures resisted the evolutionary pressures of modernity (Holt 2012:28). As a result of this, he argues:

> Creating an effective central government and rule of law sounds good to bureaucrats in Western cultures, but will fail without understanding the actual situation on the ground and molding efforts to the local culture**. Afghanistan is a large country with little infrastructure where many people live an almost Neolithic lifestyle with the culture heavily influenced by Salafist/Wahhabi/Deobandi versions of Islam that oppress women and discourage social innovation** (Holt 2012:28 Emphasis Added).

The above passage demonstrates the extent to which Holt’s patron-client model is embedded in the logics of indirect rule and echoes Henry Maine’s theories of native identity. The Afghan “native exists” outside of time – bound by the stickiness of culture and social configurations which discourage and actively resist social innovation and progress. He cites the case of the Karzai government of the time as a contemporaneous illustration of the manner in which tribe, patron-client relations, and corruption combine to “stymie the development of law and civil society” (Holt 2012:30). Perhaps most significantly, he repeatedly stresses deep historical roots of patron-client structures. He claims:

> In Afghanistan the vertical ties revolving around the distribution of booty has been ongoing since well before the Ahmad Shah Duranni’s

> creation of the Afghan empire in 1747… One might trace it all the way back to pre-Islamic intertribal raiding and the redistribution of booty by a local chief/shaykh to reward his followers and ensure loyalty … The Afghans have used their particular hybrid system of Qawm/Patron-Client redistribution as a survival machine in the face of invasion and limited resources since the time of Alexander and it does not appear that first world systems of transparency are going to be the norm in the near future (Holt 2012:30).

Once again, this perfectly mirrors arguments made by the likes of Katherine Blue Collins in relation to structures of tribal law in Iraq, which she argued pre-date Islamic and Sharia law in the country. There is a constant attempt by HTS researchers to establish the depth of historical roots of the models and conceptual lenses they put forward. In projecting backwards the client-patron model into the distant past Holt is attempting to establish it as the true embodiment and the essential, authentic character of native Afghan society. The significance of this is twofold; firstly, he is establishing the patron-client lens it as the best possible starting point to mould counterinsurgency efforts to local culture. And secondly, in showing the model to be ancient and enduring, it demonstrates a conceptual stability and rigidity which renders it more easily operationalizable than the instability of the tribe. Holt's article in which he outlines this position was published in a 2012 special edition of Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin on the subject of Language and Cultural Competency. Interestingly, the article was directly followed by another article authored by Thomas Blau and Daryl Liskey entitled 'Working With a Local Patronage System in Stability and COIN Operations' (2012:32-39). Although Blau and Liskey were not involved in the HTS, both were academics who held PhDs and worked in the area of cultural training within the US military. This paper closely echoes Holt's argument regarding the importance of patron-client networks in understanding the structure of society in Afghanistan, and sets out a step by step approach to how the military can 'use these informal patterns of power to increase stability and gain the support of a population' (Blau and Liskey 2012:32). Interestingly, Blau and Liskey directly adapt their definition of patron-client relations from the work of anthropologist James C.Scott. As typified by his ethnographic study of the people of the people of the Zomia region in the uplands of South East Asia - The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia (2009) – Scott was famously concerned with the exploration of the strategies deployed by non-state societies in order to resist domination. Yet here we have military researchers shamelessly appropriating Scott's research into patron-client

relations with a view to improving the efficacy of a military campaign concerned with undermining insurgency, pacifying a non-Western population and imposing state power. The specificities of social forms which have facilitated resistance against domination are thus deployed as a technology of domination, and with that the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985) are insidiously co-opted as weapons of the powerful.

6.6 One Village-ism at a Time

Perhaps the most pervasive alternative lenses to that of the tribe which would emerge from the research of the Human Terrain System in Afghanistan are a number of approaches which could broadly be termed 'village-isms' (Reedy 2012). While there is significant variation among these arguments, they are united by virtue of their mutually held view that it is 'the village' – rather than the tribe - which represents the most stable and operationalizable frame for understanding the structure of native, traditional Afghan society. An appropriate point of entry here is a 2012 Small Wars Journal article written by Donald Rector entitled 'Afghan Local Police: An Afghan Solution to An Afghan Problem.' Rector is a former Army ranger who went on to serve as a research manager and team leader with the HTS in Kandahar. The argument elaborated in this article in defence of the Afghan Local Police programme is mostly unremarkable insofar as it echoes many of the previous arguments we have seen regarding the co-option of local militias for the purposes of counterinsurgency. It is predicated on precisely the same logics of indirect rule as the discourses examined by Oliver Belcher discussed earlier in the chapter. However, while many of these arguments suggest that tribal structures should form the basis of the formation of local militias, for Rector, the foundation of Afghan society is not in fact the tribe, but the village. This is captured when Rector asserts:

> Success at the local level is part of, and dependant on, overall success. Within that context, it is essential to understand that everything of importance in Afghanistan happens in the village, not in Kabul, or even at the Provincial headquarters. Historically, Afghanistan has always been driven from the village up, from at least the time of Alexander the Great to the present time…it cannot be overstated. EVERYTHING OF IMPORTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN HAPPENS IN THE VILLAGE (Rector 2012:1).

In Rector's view tribe remains a feature of local life, however the core political decision-making unit is that of the village. He provides a basic, reductive image of a generalised village administrative structure based upon egalitarian, communal decision-making.

> The village has a rather pure form of democracy. The elders, representing the major tribes or family units, meet together to discuss village matters and to select a malik to lead and speak for the village. Even the women, through a network of female relatives, have had a strong influence on the decisions implemented by their husbands and sons on behalf of the village (Rector 2012:2).

The conceptual utility of the village for Rector precisely mirrors that of the tribe for early military planners, and the patron-client model for Holt, Blau and Linskey. The village is the embodiment of a traditional, authentic and deeply rooted essential essence of Afghan culture. It is this timelessness and stability of form and function that makes it the perfect counterpoint to the shifting, chaotic networks of transnational insurgency. Rector proclaims that:

> A village is a nearly self-sustaining, agrarian, economic and political entity; and it has been for thousands of years. Many years from now, when all the Western money has dried up, the Afghan village will be nearly the same as it was a thousand years ago (except for cell phones) (Rector 2012:2).

For Rector, the local militias did not emerge historically as military wings of particular tribal groups, but for the protection of the village. The village was both the source of legitimacy for the militia, and its raison d'être. According to Rector, it is vital to:

> understand the role, historically and recently, that village militias have played in Afghanistan…As previously stated, villages have always defended themselves. In the Paktia, Paktika, and Khost Provinces, these forces, known as Arbakai, were local men, authorized by the village elders to defend the village and maintain order, to include protecting the commercial interests of the agrarian village… Similar forces, known by various names throughout the tribal and mountainous

> areas of southeastern and southern Afghanistan performed similar functions in their villages and were well respected. In all cases, these forces were authorized and directed by the village leaders (Rector 2012:3).

The article addresses various common critiques of the ALP programme and some oft cited potential hazards for counterinsurgency strategies focused on local militias; however, Rector ultimately concludes that most if not all of these problems can be resolved if the programme adopts two clear principles. The first of these principles is adequate Western monitoring and oversight, which he argues, can be facilitated by embedding U.S. Special Forces personnel within the militias. The second, and most significant principle, suggested that local militias must mirror their authentic historical roots as an extension of the Afghan village. Rector claims that the negative associations with the concept of local militias in Afghanistan are the result of the prevalence of illegitimate, inauthentic armed groups formed with Soviet support in the 1980s, many of which persisted as criminal groups under the control of warlords in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. For this reason, Rector argues:

> it is important that the ALP program be under the direction of and in coordination with the village elders. It must remain a local force, not directed by the national government, with the only mandate being that of local village defense (2012:3).

Only when embedded within the village, could the ALP programme truly function as a 'culturally appropriate Afghan solution to an Afghan problem' (Rector 2012:3).

Rector's village-ism is firmly rooted in a crude old anthropological approach; it directly replaces the tribal lens with that of an equally reductive, homogenous representation of an idealised Afghan village structure. A more sophisticated elaboration of a village-ism schema to emerge from the HTS in Afghanistan can be found in the work of Kathleen Reedy. Unlike Rector, a former Army Ranger turned HTS member, Reedy was a classically trained social anthropologist, who joined the programme soon after completing her doctoral research at the University of Edinburgh. In a 2012 paper entitled 'Tribalism or Village-ism? The Dangers of "Mapping" the Human Terrain', Reedy establishes a critique of the application of the tribe concept in Afghanistan using a case

study from the field to demonstrate its inability to capture the reality of local governance and decision-making mechanisms. Reedy begins by acknowledging that, whilst the tribe concept has received rigorous scrutiny and critique in the academic world, such debates had no resonance at the level of government or military planning. She observes that:

> The military and non-military decision makers currently working in Afghanistan, who understandably to do have the same sort of time for deep ethnographic enquiry, make an attempt to be culturally sensitive and in doing so take for granted that tribalism means hierarchy (Reedy 2012:6).

This echoes the previously established notion that US military planners took for granted the existence of a hierarchical, segmentary tribal system – a nested confederacy within which higher tiers exerted control over their sub-tribes. Upon her arrival in the Zadran Arc, a region in Eastern Afghanistan named after the Zadran Tribe, the first task Reedy was assigned was to explicate the 'tribal dynamics' of the Arc, and provide a full tribal map of the area along with a list of key powerbrokers (Reedy 2012:2). This 'tail wagging the dog' phenomenon whereby research objectives and knowledge production are driven and informed by established military frames of understanding was explored in more detail in the discussion in chapter 4. Reedy, however, suggested from the outset that the production of such a tribal map was both impossible and undesirable; she comments that:

> relying on such maps (and the ideas about social organisation underpinning them) to provide information about how "tribalism" and local social organisation really work would be dangerously inaccurate (Reedy 2012:2).

According to Reedy, the notion of a neatly ordered structure of tribal confederations with distinct tiers of authority is not representative of the realities of Afghan society. She argues that:

> Such a neat system rarely occurs in the real world, and the degree to which it exists at all can vary vastly by region. In eastern Afghanistan

> (Paktika, Paktiya and Khost), for instance, rural villagers can rarely name more than a single level of tribe that they belong to and some have to struggle to come up with even that. What is more prevalent in these areas is what I call village-ism. Many or even most people in a village will often be from the same sub-tribe, and the village will often be named after that sub-tribe, but it will often also have another name more associated with place and tribal elders at this point coincide with village elders (Reedy 2012:1).

Reedy acknowledges that tribal groups are often defined, especially by outsiders, in relation to their belonging to larger tribal confederations such as the Durrani and the Ghilzai confederations, however she argues that established ethnographic research demonstrates that these are not political units with decision-making power, especially when it comes to affecting the level of the individual village. Reedy asserts that:

> Scholars of Afghanistan and Pashtun culture, however, are fairly unanimous in suggesting that such tribal groups and confederations do not act as a political organisation or work collectively, even for things like Defence. Most Pashtun interviewees support such an idea. They reminisce about an idyllic time when there was a social hierarchy that was based on honour and respect. The elders of villages were respected decision-makers with the power of enforcement; however they operated at much more of a village level (Reedy 2012:4-5).

So, while tribal terminology remains in frequent use in Afghanistan, it does not provide adequate explanation for the nature of social structures or decision-making processes in the region. Reedy explains that in her experience:

> most people in this region have the same understanding of tribalism and organize themselves in similar fashions – that is**, tribalism is an identity not a pattern for society, and villages are the basis for authority and real-decision making** (Reedy 2012:7 emphasis added).

The case study of the Zadran – which we will explore shortly – demonstrates for Reedy how, upon superficial examination, tribal identity categories can be easily misconstrued as a basis for pollical action.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given her background and training, Reedy's arguments against the utility of tribal mapping processes betray elements of the new culture approaches which are prevalent in contemporary anthropological research. By virtue of their very form, tribal maps assume the distribution of bounded, distinct tribal units occupying their own homogenous spatial positions. According to Reedy, these maps:

> start out with broad tribal overviews, then slowly zoom in to be more specific, breaking down from super-tribes (such as the Ghilzai or Durrani) and eventually moving down to levels like the Zadran or sub-stribes like the Ibrahim Khel (Reedy 2012:2)

In contrast to this distinctly old anthropological mosaic style view, Reedy stresses the dangers of the homogeneity assumed and imposed through the mapping process. She points out that:

> In addition to not necessarily being relevant to patterns of real power, maps can wind up obscuring as much as they reveal. The maps … for instance, follow district lines and make it appear as if tribal lines neatly followed those boundaries. They do not allow for social variation between and sometimes even within villages (Reedy 2012:3).

Reedy is arguing that mapping tribal distribution in this manner serves to flatten and obscure the complexity of both the politics and the identity of a given space. This is a highly significant line of argumentation which bears remarkable similarity to Susan Wright's (1998) description of her own fieldwork in Iran in the 1970s. In making the case against the applicability of old anthropological culture, Wright describes how a tribe which was presumed to embody a discrete and homogenous identity was in fact a site of profound difference and variability. Wright observes how:

> Multiple identities were constantly negotiated; links with people in tribes from which they had fled were maintained or re-invented: there was no bounded, consensual, authentic, ahistorical, culture. Theoretical developments in cultural studies, and in post-structural and feminist anthropology, have led us to understand that **"**cultures" are not, nor ever were, naturally bounded entities (Wright 1998:9).

For Reedy, mapping could never capture the complexity of identity constructions and their distribution without 'going village by village, or even neighbourhood by neighbourhood. However, as with all the various approaches we have considered thus far, the appropriation of a new cultural paradigm is confined strictly to the realm of critique; when it comes to proposing a viable alternative schema for engagement, variability and difference become difficult to weaponize.

Reedy cites the example of the Zadran identity group in the so-called Zadran Arc region of Loya Paktiya as a prime illustration of the misguided tendency to apply a tribal lens to understanding the social structure of Afghan society. The Zadran appeared to many in the US military as a quintessential tribal people, and with that came implicit assumptions of the importance of tribal structure and belonging to the exercise of political power in the region. Reedy believes that this impression is somewhat understandable upon initial observation, and examines the 2010 project for Zadran tribal unity as an example of how certain powerbrokers sought to deliberately represent an image of tribal governance (Reedy 2012:7). Reedy describes:

> In spite of the precedence of local or historical ties over tribal ones, on February 10, 2010, some local notables held a Zadran tribal shura with the stated intent of achieving tribal unification, providing local security especially for the Khost-Gardez Road paving project, and cooperating with GIRA. It was attended by several GIRoA and Afghan Security Forces officials, including the Deputy Minister of Interior, and was chaired by Pacha Khan Zadran. About 280 elders from around the Zadran region participated. It was the third such event, with the first two having much smaller audiences of 30 and 50 elders. At the end of the day, the shura came to a consensus on unity and security, agreed to fight the Taliban,17 and decided to hold further shuras to continue working with GIRoA and ANSF (Reedy 2012:7).

From the outside this shura was hailed as ‘a grassroots attempt utilize traditional forms of authority and social organization to interact with the government’ (Reedy 2012:7). The shura appeared clear evidence of a distinctively tribal, authentic decision-making process in action. However, despite the optics of the situation, Reedy concludes that in reality this event was nothing more than a ‘political ploy on the part of key leaders for their personal gain and power, as many of the attendees were cronies of a handful of men, including Pacha Khan’ (Reedy 2012:7). In reality, this meeting was not invested with any authority to make decisions on behalf of the people of the Zadran Arc, and later attempts to continue the unity project and arrange further tribal meetings of the Zadran were to fail due to the disinterest of local Zadran elders (Reedy 2012:7). Despite the attempts of figures such as Pacha Khan to position themselves as leaders among the Zadran, Reedy explains that interviews conducted during her research in the area revealed a very different story. Despite being aware of Pacha Khan, Reedy suggests that respondents:

> said, however, that he had no influence over them, nor had he ever. Beyond that, every person I interviewed said that there was *no one* in their area that made claims to represent all Zadran the way he did, because there was no uniting the Zadran—they were too individualistic and disparate. No single person could accurately represent them, not even over smaller sub-regions (Reedy 2012:8).

The Zadran unity project represented an attempt by individuals to capitalise upon American understandings of tribal authority with a view to positioning themselves as figures of leadership with the capacity to exercise power over their fellow Zadran. According to Reedy, the idea that any political power in the region was exercised at the level of tribe was completely misguided.

If not at the level of tribe, then where exactly does political authority and decision-making power lie in the Zadran Arc? According to Reedy, her research clearly demonstrated that local power operates at the level of the village, and is generally exercised in each individual village by respected village elders (Reedy 2012:8-9). Furthermore, Reedy insists that this authority applies only within each village and suggests that ‘even for real elders, the line was drawn at the edge of the village—there were no over-arching, hierarchical elders who could mobilize or represent the Zadran’

(Reedy 2012:9). This view suggests that the concept of tribe exists only insofar as it can be considered a single aspect of an individual's identity. Reedy explains:

> What Zadran do have, though, is a sense of tribal identity. Most would list Zadran as one of their array of answers to the "*qawm*" question. There is a certain pride in being a Zadran. There are lines of prestige within and across communities that earn some people an automatic respect. Such tribal "elders" do not necessarily wield any tangible authority, but they would be heard out if they chose to say something. But as I suggested above, identity and social organization are not synonymous, especially when it is only one of many identities they choose to embrace. For the Zadran, it is their identity as a villager than matters most for decision-making and wielding real influence. Anything more than that is just something neat they have in common. As Zadran interviewees told me time and again, at the end of the day, "it's just a name (Reedy 2012:9).

According to Reedy, the misunderstanding of tribal organization has led coalition forces to mistakenly attempt to prop up local tribal leaders and tribal institutions as a strategy to provide a locally rooted alternative for those who may be attracted to supporting insurgency. Reedy insists that:

> relying on such a top-down approach to counterinsurgency, reconciliation and even local governance assumes that Zadran society is defined by a hierarchical tribalism that has singular leaders capable of commanding the respect and actions of many sub-tribes Indeed, for any traditional Pashtuns, relying on tribal maps and self-identified "leaders" may lead to ostracizing or disenfranchising the rest of the population. Leaders amongst the Pashtuns are first amongst equals, and even the position of village elder is flexible and must be continuously reaffirmed by a judgmental population (Reedy 2012:10).

As we have seen, Reedy's critique of the tribal lens contains elements of so-called 'new approaches' to culture which depart from the Boasian ethnographic culture concept. However, instead of following this line of enquiry and problematising the extent to which

any one generalisable schema can capture the complexity of Afghan society, Reedy instead offers an alternative lens which she believes more accurately represents the reality of Afghan social organisation. Reedy advocates for what she terms a village-ism, and with that proposes a new foundation for a generalisable approach to be adopted by the US military as a strategy to leverage the local population. She comments:

> It is villagers, then, who make decisions about who to support and in what ways, according to what is best for their village. If we want to engage "local authority" in an attempt to strengthen GIRoA and undermine the insurgents, outreach should focus at the village, not the "tribal," level. Repeated attempts to make maps of tribes and lists of key tribal leaders will only stymie our efforts and lose our already tenuous support. Village-ism, not tribalism, is what reigns in Eastern Afghanistan, so if we want to win over the population, we will have to do it the hard way—one village, one person at a time (Reedy 2012:10).

6.7 Conclusion – New Schemas and Old Cultures

This chapter began by examining the US military's early pre-occupation with the tribe concept as a vehicle for understanding the nature of society in Afghanistan. This perspective assumed the tribe to be the 'most important military, political and cultural unit in that country' (Gant 2009:4). By 2007, US and coalition forces were struggling to cope with the growing threat of an expanding Taliban insurgency in the South, and earlier attempts to counter the Taliban through the legitimisation of the central government and the expansion of the state-controlled security forces of the ANA and ANP had proven largely ineffective. In response to this crisis the US turned to the tribes, and by the end of 2009 a full-scale effort was under way to empower and arm locally based militias and tribal defence forces to tackle the security crisis and counter the Taliban. The chapter then explored the theorisation of this tribal turn in the work of Aziz Hakimi and Oliver Belcher. Hakimi considered the arming of tribal militias as 'the culmination of a series of attempts to tap into and rejuvenate what were presented as enduring rural traditions of self-protection… that were based upon an idealized and reified vision of the past (2013:389). This position is echoed by Belcher when he suggests that tribal militias come to be viewed (and constituted) as a proper antidote *because of* their timeless, local,

simple, and cultural character, with the “tribal” taken to properly mirror the authentic “indigenous essence” of Afghan society (Belcher 2013:59). Contemporary counterinsurgency discourses have a tendency to conceptualise insurgencies as complex and adaptive transnational networks, and as such, the tribe was seen to provide a fixed and stable counterpoint rooted in an authentic, indigenous social form.

The analysis in the previous chapter revealed the extent to which HTS research in Iraq enthusiastically adopted the lens of tribe in its understanding of native identity and made recommendations regarding the potential to leverage tribal dispute resolution mechanisms and tribal governance structures in support of US counterinsurgency objectives. Furthermore, these discourses identified a clearly ordered hierarchical segmentary tribal structure which in turn justified, authorised and informed a strategy of engagement focused upon leveraging the centralised authority of tribal leaders. Given that the tribe concept was even more pervasive in military understandings of society in Afghanistan, my clear expectation at the outset of this research was to replicate these findings in my analysis of HTS research conducted in the field. However, what I did find was markedly different. This chapter has shown the various ways in which HTS research broke from the tribal model in Afghanistan. Researchers such as Dan Green retained a foundation of a tribal lens, but cautioned that tribal engagement in Afghanistan must begin with an understanding of the fundamental differences between Afghan tribes and those in Iraq. According to Green, Afghan tribes lacked the clearly ranked hierarchical structures of their Iraqi counterparts, and additionally, traditional tribal leadership structures had been weakened through the attrition of war and foreign intervention. As such, Afghan tribes lacked the centralised leadership structures necessary to render them practically useful to counterinsurgency efforts. In response to this Green proposed a radical solution whereby coalition forces would engage in an ambitious process of social engineering with a view to installing and restoring centralised tribal leadership structures. Clint Cooper’s research echoes Green’s concerns regarding the difficulty identifying tribal figures with real decision-making power in Pashtun regions. He puts forward a typology of three key authority figures that military personnel should be aware of, but cautions that these roles have all weakened over time and accepts that this – along with a general tendency towards more communal decision-making strategies – poses problems for any strategy based upon tribal engagement. Cooper ultimately concludes that the level of local variation renders the application of any general strategy problematic, and emphasises the importance of a more situational approach to locating power structures on a village-by-village basis. So, although retaining a crude old anthropological approach to culture, Cooper’s research advocates for a sort of proto-

villageism in which we can see the beginning of the more sophisticated approaches to follow in the work of Kathleen Reedy.

The chapter then explored the research of Ron Holt and his explicit disavowal of the utility of the relevance of the tribe concept as a tool for intervention in Afghanistan. Holt denies the existence of a fixed a stable category of tribe in Afghanistan, and denies the importance of tribe to the political structure of the country. He explores the ambiguity of the term 'qawm', and explains that although it is frequently translated directly as tribe, the term contains an innate flexibility which allows it to denote all manner of different communal groups. Holt's critique of tribe adopts a distinctly 'new culture' approach to the concept which conceives it as a social form perpetually in flux, and suggests that the very plasticity of this form of mutating social organization allows for functions and structures to vary in the face of changing circumstances and challenges from the outside and inside the qawm (Holt 2012:28). However, instead of pursuing this avenue of enquiry further, Holt instead suggests the replacement of the tribe concept with another generalised schema – that of patron-client relations and neopatrimonialism – which he insists more accurately reflects the reality of Afghan social and political relations, and as such, provides a more effective basis upon which to build a strategy for military engagement. Finally, the chapter examined the ideas put forward in the research of Donald Rector and Kathleen Reedy. Like Holt, Rector and Reedy disavow tribal understandings of social structure in Afghanistan, and instead put forward an alternative explanation derived from their own research in the field – the concept of village-ism. As was the case with Holt's analysis, the chapter demonstrated how Reedy's critique of the tribe concept appears informed by elements of a more contemporary new anthropological approach to culture, however her alternative vision of Afghanistan as defined by village-ism is itself firmly reflective of an old anthropological approach to culture.

Throughout this chapter we have seen the various ways in which HTS research problematised tribal understandings of Afghanistan, and offered alternative generalisable schemas so as to enable more effective US military engagement in the country. In the conclusion of this thesis we will interrogate the significance of this as it relates to the culture concept, and the weaponization of culture more broadly.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Reflexive Gaze

For proponents of HTS, academics who objected to the participation of their colleagues in the war effort were faced with a decision. Derek Gregory captures this perspective with reference to the work of Sheila Jager. He comments:

> In a depressing little hurrah for the martialization of culture, anthropologist Sheila Jager demands that scholars choose between 'doing nothing' (and 'leaving the fighting to the military') and censuring those who 'do something' (Gregory 2008:45, Jager 2007:17-18).

Jager posits a situation whereby critics of HTS could either do nothing and remain silent, or do something by publicly criticising the decision of other social scientists to aid the military. Those who chose to the participate suggested they were faced with a similar binary decision. HTS member Brian Brereton hit out at criticisms that social scientists' participation in the programme represented a violation of the trust of the subjects of their research. He argues:

> to me, doing nothing to mitigate the effects of potentially destructive military forces on a local population equally served to violate these relationships. Rephrased, I felt "do no harm" should never be an excuse to "do no good." When presented with the opportunity to work in HTS, I felt it would be better to understand and attempt to shape the US intervention in Afghanistan (Brereton 2015:265).

According to this logic, military intervention would take place regardless of whether social scientists decided to participate, and because of this it was better to participate with a view to providing accurate cultural knowledge which could mitigate some of the more deleterious effects of military action. This argument assumes the acceptance of McFate's view that 'social science conducted on the ground in support of the military during a war

was not only valuable to the mission, it had the potential to reduce the level of violence' (McFate 2015:46). However, in both these cases, the representation of the binary choices available to researchers are fundamentally false. Commenting on Jager's claim, Gregory contends that:

> this is a false choice that evades the critical responsibility to question what that 'something' is and what that 'something' does. Even on Jager's own diminished terms, however, a partisan appropriation of the cultural sciences that refuses the reflexivity of the return gaze, treats culture as inert and ignores the relations of power involved in all cultural forms and practices is unlikely to provide much insight into the conduct of war (Gregory 2008:45).

In keeping with a rich tradition of critical scholarship, this study conceives an entirely different role for social research which embraces this 'critical responsibility to question what that 'something' is and what that 'something' does' (Gregory 2008:45). This involves the reflexive inversion of the gaze of social science to take as the object of its research the complicity of academic knowledge production in processes of military intervention, governance and domination. Taking the research produced by HTS, and the reflections of former HTS members on their time in the field with the programme, this study has sought to critically interrogate the role of social scientists embedded with the US military during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In particular, it has examined the way in which these discourses weaponized understandings of Iraqi and Afghan culture, and deployed them instrumentally in support of the realisation of US military counterinsurgency objectives. This was achieved in the following manner:

The study provided an overview of the intellectual history of the various iterations of the culture concept within the discipline of anthropology in order to set the scene for the analysis to follow. This charted the transition from original pre-anthropological understandings of culture as a measure of refinement or civilization, to the emergence of a pluralistic 'old anthropological' culture concept embodied in the Boasian ethnographic tradition of the 20th century. This iteration of the culture concept would dominate anthropology up to the latter half of the 20th century, and remains pervasive in 'common sense' lay understandings of culture in the West. The chapter then drew upon the work of Susan Wright (1998) to set out the central characteristics of 'old

anthropological' culture and explain its view of the world in terms of a mosaic of clearly bounded, distinct cultures each characterised by their unique spatial location and possessive of a relatively homogenous set of fixed characteristics rooted in inheritance and shared meanings. Next I examined the decline of old ideas of culture within the discipline of anthropology in the latter decades of the 20th century. The growing influences of postmodernist, postructuralist and postcolonial theory led to the emergence of new approaches to culture within anthropology and the wider human and social sciences, which proffered a view of culture as an active and continuous process of meaning-making. According to this new view of culture, symbols and ideas remained in a constant state of flux; never attaining a stable or fixed meaning, and remaining 'polyvalent, fluid and hybridised' (Wright 1998:9). This also saw culture as a site of political and ideological contestation, and this extended to explore contestation regarding the culture concept itself. Citing Wright's examples of the indigenous Kayapo in Brazil, and the 1995 UNESCO report 'Our Creative Diversity', the chapter examined two such instances of the mobilisation of particular understandings of culture towards the realisation of specific political ends. Pertinent to the discussion that will follow in this conclusion, it was shown that while the Kayapo example represented a conscious appropriation of culture and an awareness of its instrumentalization as a political strategy, the UNESCO report demonstrated no reflexive awareness of its role in the production of culture, or the political dimension involved in exercising its power to define and make meaning. The significance of this distinction will become apparent later in the conclusion in the discussion of the commitment to the veracity of knowledge produced through social scientific method. Finally, I set the stage for the analysis of HTS approaches to culture that would follow by examining the pervasiveness of old anthropological approaches to culture in US military approaches in the early stages of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This examined the work of Rochelle Davis showing the crude national character iterations of the culture concept embodied in the content knowledge approaches to cultural training, and the critical work of David Price, Roberto Gonzalez and Robert Albro on the Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24 – one of the foundational documents of the cultural turn. Both examples demonstrated that, despite the widespread disappearance of old culture in the contemporary practice of academic anthropology, these anachronistic understandings of the culture concept were widespread in the US military cultural turn. Having established these understandings of the various iterations of the culture concept, this chapter established the groundwork necessary for the critical interrogation of HTS research that followed.

The next chapter of the thesis involved a critical interrogation of the lived experience of HTS researchers based upon their own reflections on their time serving in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan. This primarily draws upon the recollections contained in Montgomery McFate and Janice H. Laurence 2015 edited collection 'Social Science Goes to War' and represents the first critical exploration of these first-hand accounts of researchers' experiences conducting research whilst embedded with the US military. To begin, the chapter considered arguments put forward by HTS members which demonstrated a unique commitment to the veracity of knowledge produced through social scientific research. Echoing the arguments of Montgomery McFate which informed the creation of HTS, researchers suggested that military personnel did not possess the skills, experience and technical ability necessary to produce accurate and complete cultural knowledge of the local populations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Conversely, the recollections suggest that social scientists – with their formal training in research methodologies and disciplinary expertise – were uniquely positioned to provide the military with credible, accurate and verifiable representations of the cultures of Iraq and Afghanistan. This was considered significant insofar as it implied a deeply positivistic epistemological frame in which knowledge produced through Western social scientific method is represented as verifiable objective truth.

The next section of the chapter, however, departed from this view of HTS research as objective knowledge, and instead described James Dorough-Lewis' argument that the unique ability of social science lies in its capacity to represent the culture of the local population in terms of their own subjective understandings of the world. This was explained in terms of the anthropological distinction between etic and emic forms of knowledge, and examined how within this frame HTS was positioned as having privileged access to reality as perceived by another culture, thus enabling the translation of the emic. The following section explored the way HTS researchers conceptualised their participation in terms of providing 'voices for the voiceless'. This demonstrated examples of researchers positioning themselves as self-appointed advocates for the local population and claiming to provide the people of Iraq and Afghanistan with a seat at the table in the military decision-making process. Furthermore, researchers were shown to suggests that they were uniquely

positioned to establish a relationship of trust with the population, and that these relationships, combined with their methodological expertise, enabled them to represent a genuine, authentic will of the people. I argued that this perspective failed to account in any way for the power-relations involved in the research process, nor did it engage with any of the abundant academic literature dealing with problems of representation in social scientific research.

The chapter then examined material pertaining to the nature of the knowledge produced by HTS research, and for whom this knowledge was intended. This demonstrated that despite researchers' self-representations as advocates for the local population, their own testimonies show clearly that cultural knowledge was only considered valuable insofar as it furthered the objectives of the military. This was further reflected in the pervasive allusions to the need to continuously demonstrate their operational value and relevance to the units with which they were embedded. This was also supported by the type of knowledge produced by researchers. Researchers' recollections consistently emphasised the need to tailor their research output so as to make it as intelligible as possible for its intended audience – the US military. This echoes Said's observations of the historical role of the Orientalist as a translator of the East for the consumption of a Western audience to facilitate its domination. Despite claiming to provide voices to the voiceless, it is strikingly clear that the knowledge produced through HTS was research was not intended for those who were its subjects. The section concludes by showing how this claim is supported by the frequent deployment of neoliberal nomenclature which refers to the military as 'customers', 'end-users' and 'consumers' whilst only ever referring to research subjects as 'stakeholders'. Finally, the chapter concluded with two brief sections: the first examining the positioning of HTS researchers as arbiters of authenticity, and the second exploring self-conceptualisations as intrepid, Orientalist adventurers.

I then examined the instrumental deployment of the concept of tribe in HTS research in Iraq, and the arguments put forward by HTS members regarding the potential to leverage elements of traditional tribal structures to support the achievement of US military objectives. Anthropologist Roberto Gonzalez has labelled the deployment of the concept by militarized social

scientists as ‘peculiar’ and ‘outdated’ (2009a:18) and comments that ‘few anthropologists today would consider using the term tribe as an analytical category, or even as a concept for practical application (2009a:15). I examined definitions of the tribe concept, and outlined the reasons for the decline in its usage by anthropologists. These drew upon the work of David Sneath, which outlined three factors contributing to this decline – the conceptual incoherence and definitional instability of tribe as an analytical term; its entanglement with crude theories of social evolutionism; and the extent to which its emergence was tied to the logical and operation of European colonialism. This was followed by a consideration of Mahmood Mamdani’s definition of the tribe concept as ‘a creation of laws drawn up by a colonial state which imposes group identities on individual subjects and thereby institutionalises group life’ (Mamdani 2012b). Mamdani describes the role of tribe as a central administrative category through which 19th century colonial governments conceptualised, categorised, ordered and governed local populations designated as primitive and native. Mamdani’s view of tribe as a technology of pacification and colonial governance profoundly influenced the analysis of the tribe concept in the discourses of HTS which would follow. The following section delved into the data, and explored HTS research which argued for traditional tribal law and tribal dispute resolution mechanisms as a remedy to sectarian violence in the new Iraqi state. It examined the depictions of the tribal legal system outlined in the research of Kathrine Blue Carroll, and her views on its utility for the promotion of stability. According to Blue-Carroll, the sulha process was an effective mechanism for reconciliation in Baghdad for three main reasons (2011:28). Firstly, she suggested that the type of reconciliation needed in the aftermath of sectarian violence was fundamentally communal in nature, and that tribal law provides for exactly this type of solution. Secondly, she argued that mechanisms of state justice, and, in particular, the court system, lacked the capacity and integrity to address the issues at hand, and as such, tribal processes were needed to fill the void left by inadequate state infrastructure. And finally, Blue Carroll suggests that the sulha provides a pathway to reconciliation that is both culturally acceptable and rooted in shared and common heritage. These arguments for the utility of tribal reconciliation mechanisms are rooted in an understanding of tribal structures as representative of an essential, traditional essence of Iraqi social structure. As such, they were viewed as useful to US military objectives insofar as they were seen to offer a rooted, stable and authentic alternative to the fractured web of sectarian violence in which the country was embroiled. The

section that followed explored remarkably similar arguments in HTS advancing the case for leveraging tribal governance structures in precisely the same manner. Once again, these views conceptualised the tribe as an enduring, essential indigenous essence of the Iraqi people, and accordingly put forward arguments for the incorporation of tribal governance structures into the new Iraqi state. Finally, the chapter concluded by presenting an overall picture of Iraqi tribal structure that is put forward by these discourses. HTS research depicts the Iraqi tribal system as a clearly defined, hierarchical segmentary system in which authority was concentrated in the hands of powerful leaders who exercised power over others in their tribal unit. The implications of this are twofold; firstly, the approach to tribe demonstrates the extent to which HTS research in Iraq continued to be influenced by the old anthropological approaches to culture which informed the creation of the project. And secondly, the assumption of a clearly defined hierarchy led HTS to advocate for an approach to counterinsurgeny which emphasised the importance of Key Leader Engagement [KLE]. This is succinctly captured in the following excerpt from an RRC report on tribe:

> The segmentary and hierarchical nature of Iraqi tribes also makes engagement relatively straightforward, in theory. Each tribe has a defined set of sub-tribes, and these can be mapped fairly definitively given the time and resources. There are certain key players at each level of hierarchy with whom to establish relationships, and these key players carry an enormous amount of influence—thus, engaging with the right leader at the right level can bring along that tribe, though not necessarily the subtribe (Foust 2008:219).

Finally, having examined the deployment of the tribe concept by HTS researchers in Iraq, the study turned its attention to the role of tribe in the work of HTS in Afghanistan. The use of the lens of tribe was even more pervasive in US military and political understandings of social structure in Afghanistan, and in line with this, my expectation was that this would also be reflected by a similar pre-occupation with the tribe in the research produced by HTTs in the field. Guided by assumptions regarding the tribal nature of society in Afghanistan, the US military turned towards the arming of ‘traditional’

tribal militias, and the formation of local police forces, in their attempts to undermine the surging Taliban insurgency in the south of the country. Aziz Hakimi considered the arming of tribal militias as 'the culmination of a series of attempts to tap into and rejuvenate what were presented as enduring rural traditions of self-protection… that were based upon an idealized and reified vision of the past (2013:389). Contemporary counterinsurgency discourses have a tendency to conceptualise insurgencies as complex and adaptive transnational networks (Kilcullen 2003, Belcher 2013), and as such, the tribe was seen to provide a fixed and stable counterpoint rooted in an authentic, indigenous social form. In this way, the US military policy of arming the tribes closely mirrors the logics of HTS research in Iraq which argued for the instrumental utility of tribal dispute resolutions and governance systems as remedies to sectarian violence and instability.

While I expected to find similar calls for tribe in HTS, what I did find was markedly different, and research conducted by HTS social scientists broke from the tribal model to varying degrees. Researchers such as Dan Green retained a foundation of a tribal lens, but cautioned that tribal engagement in Afghanistan must begin with an understanding of the fundamental differences between Afghan tribes and those in Iraq. According to Green, Afghan tribes lacked the clearly ranked hierarchical structures of their Iraqi counterparts, and additionally, traditional tribal leadership structures had been weakened through the attrition of war and foreign intervention. As such, Afghan tribes lacked the centralised leadership structures necessary to render them practically useful to counterinsurgency efforts. In response to this Green proposed a radical solution whereby coalition forces would engage in an ambitious process of social engineering with a view to installing and restoring centralised tribal leadership structures. Clint Cooper's research echoed Green's concerns regarding the difficulty identifying tribal figures with real decision-making power in Pashtun regions. He put forward a typology of three key authority figures that military personnel should be aware of, but cautioned that these roles have all weakened over time and accepted that this – along with a general tendency towards more communal decision-making strategies – posed problems for any strategy based upon tribal engagement. Cooper ultimately concludes that the level of local variation renders the application of any general strategy problematic, and emphasises the importance of a more situational approach to locating power structures on a village-by-village basis. Despite retaining a crude old anthropological approach to culture, Cooper's research advocated for a sort of proto-villageism which overlapped with the more sophisticated elaboration of the village lens put forward by Kathleen Reedy.

Following this, I explored the research of Ron Holt and his explicit disavowal of the utility of the tribe concept as a tool of intervention in Afghanistan. Holt denied the existence of a fixed a stable category of tribe in Afghanistan, and downplayed the importance of tribe to the political structure of the country. He explored the ambiguity of the term 'qawm' - explaining that although it is frequently translated directly as tribe, the term contains an innate flexibility which allows it to denote all manner of different communal groups. Holt's critique of tribe adopts a distinctly 'new culture' approach to the concept which conceives it as a social form perpetually in flux, and suggests that 'the very plasticity of this form of mutating social organization allows for functions and structures to vary in the face of changing circumstances and challenges from the outside and inside the qawm' (Holt 2012:28). However, instead of pursuing this avenue of enquiry further, Holt instead suggested the replacement of the tribe concept with another generalised schema – that of patron-client relations and neopatrimonialism – which Holt insisted more accurately reflected the reality of Afghan social and political relations, and as such, provided a more effective basis upon which to build a strategy for military engagement. Finally, the chapter examined the ideas put forward in the research of Donald Rector and Kathleen Reedy. Like Holt, Rector and Reedy disavow tribal understandings of social structure in Afghanistan, and instead put forward an alternative explanation derived from their own research in the field – the concept of village-ism. Once again, I demonstrated that although Reedy's critique of the tribe concept was informed by elements of a more contemporary new anthropological approach to culture, her alternative vision of Afghanistan as defined by village-ism is itself firmly reflective of an old anthropological approach to culture. The research produced by HTS in Afghanistan challenged the utility of the application of the tribal lens to the understanding of social organisation and decision-making structures in the country. Through this process, the critiques of tribe put forward by HTS researchers betrayed evidence of the influence of more contemporary anthropological understandings of culture as heterogenous, malleable and existing in a state of flux. However, these ideas were never extended beyond the critique of tribe, and instead of pursuing the significance of this variability in social form, HTS researchers proffered their own alternative generalisable schemas of Afghan social structure – such as neopatrimonialism or village-ism – which were firmly rooted in precisely the same old anthropological culture concept as that of the tribe.

7.2 The Veracity of Social Scientific Knowledge Revisited

This study did not set out to analyse the understandings of Iraqi and Afghan society contained in the research of HTS with a view to assessing their accuracy, or the extent to which they represent objective truths about the nature of these societies. Instead, it is located in an epistemological tradition which eschews the universal in favour of contextualising and historicising notions of truth, knowledge, rationality and power (Crowley 2009). It was not my intention to dismiss these representations of Iraqi and Afghan identity in order to replace them with my own, truer, more accurate account. My approach explicitly sought to 'avoid becoming involved in arguments about whether what they say is true, or even whether their statements make sense' (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:xxiv), and instead to critically interrogate their deployment of the concept of culture 'as an operational category within a specific discipline at a particular historical moment' (Rabinow 1991:4). This is in direct opposition to the manner in which HTS researchers conceptualised the practice of research. Through an analysis of the reflections of former HTS members, this study has demonstrated the commitment of HTS members to the epistemological veracity of the knowledge produced through social scientific research. The project is frequently justified in terms of the unique capacity of the academic expert – through their possession of the requisite methodological tools and disciplinary training – to produce accurate and complete socio-cultural knowledge of the local populations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Furthermore, HTS researchers have claimed that it is their social scientific expertise, in combination with their unique ability to establish a relationship of trust with local subjects, that enables them to comprehend and represent the desires and interests of the local population with genuine fidelity, and position themselves as 'voices of the voiceless.' In addition, my analysis has identified the propensity of researchers to position themselves as arbiters of authenticity. This is exemplified by HTS research designed to discern genuine, authentic leaders and distinguish so-called 'real sheiks' from fake ones. Where locals are determined to be unreliable narrators of their own identity, social scientific knowledge becomes the designator of authenticity and legitimacy.

The implications of these commitments for the veracity of the knowledge produced through social scientific research are numerous. In the first instance, this positivistic understanding of the researcher as producer of objective, accurate knowledge ignores decades of social theory dealing with crises of representation and 'issues concerning power in the research and writing process, in particular the power of the researcher through (often unacknowledged) knowledge-claims that written research

both can and should represent the realities of other people' (Stanley 1996: 45). Throughout the reflections of former HTS researchers, there is almost no recognition of the power imbalances inherent in the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of research, and there is no recognition whatsoever of the fact that the researchers were actively involved in the military occupation of the countries in which they were operating. Lisa Tuhiwai Smith eloquently describes the power relations constituted in this relationship between Western researchers and non-Western subjects in the conduct of military conquest and occupation:

> From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary… The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples… it is surely difficult to discuss research methodology and indigenous peoples together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices (Smith 2008:1-2).

As my analysis of the nature, format and intended audience of HTS research demonstrated, HTS was engaged in the production of cultural knowledge for the express purpose of facilitating the more effective pacification and domination of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan by the US military. In this way, HTS echoes Said's characterisation of the 1798 French invasion of Egypt as 'very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one' (Said 2003:42).

Another significant implication of this commitment to the veracity of social scientific knowledge is its centrality to the way in which the West produces itself as exceptional. Wright examines this tendency when she contrasts the instrumentalization of culture by the Kayapo people with the old anthropological definition of culture set out in the 1995 UNESCO report 'Our Creative Diversity' (Wright 1998). While the Kayapo instrumentalization demonstrates a conscious and reflexive appropriation of the culture

concept towards the realisation of specific political ends, the experts responsible for the report show no awareness of the obvious political dimension of the process of defining culture. Instead, the UNESCO report is presented as an apolitical representation of an objective truth about the reality of culture in the world. Latour argues that it is precisely through this understanding of Western knowledge production as a scientific depiction of objective reality that the West positions itself as exceptional among the various 'cultures' of the world. According to Latour, this view suggests that:

> "the West" was not a culture "among" others since it enjoyed a privileged access to [scientific] nature and its already-accomplished unification. Europeans, Americans, Australians and later Japanese certainly possessed cultural traits which identified them as unique cultural groups, but their access to [scientific] nature swiftly made these superficial differences disappear. (Latour 2002:10)

Latour's formulation can illuminate our understanding of the unreflexive cultural production of HTS. On the surface, HTS purports to ascribe to an orthodox cultural relativist epistemology (McFate 2005a), and thus conceives of itself in an interpretative role – translating the distinctive characteristics of one culture so as to render it intelligible to another, different but equally distinct culture. However, in reality, through its commitment to the veracity of social scientific knowledge and its concomitant privileged capacity to access the reality of the world, it positions itself as fundamentally outside of the sphere of culture. As a consequence, the relationship between the US and the people of Iraq and Afghanistan becomes an encounter between the civilized, rational and scientific West, and a backwards, cultural Other. The production of this binary distinction will be further explored in the next section, through the analysis of the roles of concepts of tribe and culture in HTS research.

The final implication of the researchers' understandings of their role in the process of knowledge production relates to the way in which it facilitates a de-politicization of the military occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, and forms part of a wider process of discursive repositioning of the US as a neutral, benevolent force in the region. I have described how HTS conceptualised themselves as voices for the voiceless, and claimed that – through their research – they alone had the capacity to represent with fidelity the wants, needs and desires of the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. In this way they claimed to serve as proxy representatives of the local population during the military

decision-making process. Dorough-Lewis argued that this process could ‘facilitate the military’s redefining the term “we” as one encompassing the military and the population, while marginalizing spoilers’ (2015:208). This proposes an instrumental role for HTS in the reconfiguration of the fundamental material relations between the local population and the occupying military force so as to position them on the same side of a conflict against ‘spoilers.’ This resonates with the conceptualisation of counterinsurgency as a battle for ‘hearts and minds’ whereby the goal of the occupying force is the co-option of the local population so as to undermine resistance. In this way, HTS research can be understood as part of a wider discursive repositioning of the US military role in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a whitewashing of its position as a hostile, invading force.

7.3 Culture and Tribe

Mamdani has explored how the19th century mode of governmentality known as indirect rule was a product of academic discourses which posited the existence of a binary opposition between two distinct types of human subject (Mamdani 2012a, 2012b). According to this logic, the mission to spread civilization to the colonies had failed because attempts to directly transplant Western laws and governance structures were fundamentally incompatible with the essential characteristics of so-called ‘native’ peoples. Mamdani describes how, according to scholars like Henry Maine, it was customary law which:

> distinguished the West from the non-West, universal civilisation from local custom and, crucially, the settler from the native, thereby laying the groundwork for a theory of nativism. If the settler was modern, the native was not; if the settler was defined by history, the native was defined by geography; if modern polities were defined by legislation and sanction, those of the native were defined by habitual observance (Mamdani 2012b).

Native societies, and thus native subjects, were characterised by their adherence to custom and tradition, their immunity to progress and resistance to change, and their fundamentally communal nature. It was within this frame that Mamdani examined the deployment of the concept of the tribe as an administrative category through which native subjects were to be understood, ordered, pacified and governed. This study has

demonstrative the extent to which this juxtaposition of the essential native and the progressive Western subject continue to inform projects of intervention in the 21st century.

In charting the trajectory of the concept of culture within the discipline of anthropology, the study established a distinction between an old anthropological culture – typified in the Boasian ethnographic approach to culture pervasive in the first half of the 20th century – and new anthropological approaches to culture which have emerged since the 1970s. Old anthropological culture viewed the world as composed of a series of geographically distributed, bounded, distinct cultures – each possessing a limited set of defined characteristics, a high degree of internal homogeneity and an inherited collection of social norms, meanings and beliefs. The study charted its decline within anthropology, and suggested that by the latter part of the 20th century this old anthropological view was largely obsolete among practicing anthropologists. In its place were new approaches to culture in which it was understood as an active process of meaning -making – constantly in flux, subject to contestation and cross cutting spatiotemporal boundaries. A similar trajectory was observed in relation to the tribe concept in anthropology. Early 20th century understandings of tribe as a generalisable segmentary social structure based upon kinship and patrilineal inheritance became untenable as anthropologists began to problematise the conceptual incoherence as a stable category, its social evolutionary implications, and its relationship with colonialism. Unlike the culture concept, which remained influential within the discipline under the guise of new culture, tribe largely faded from use and ‘‘few anthropologists today would consider using the term tribe as an analytical category, or even as a concept for practical application’ (2009d:15). Apart from the overlap in their trajectory within anthropology, the old culture concept and the concept of the tribe are deeply entangled. In fact, the model of the generalisable segmentary tribe is a perfect example of the old anthropological culture model in action. This study has seen how the old anthropological idea of culture, and indeed the lens of tribe, greatly informed early approaches to cultural knowledge production and training in the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Why were these approaches present despite their apparent anachronistic status within the discipline in which they were born? And, given the deployment of practicing social scientists into the field in the form of HTS, would the influence of these concepts persist? This study has made a contribution to answering these questions.

The exploration of HTS research and the recollections of HTT members on their time in the field in Iraq demonstrated the widespread deployment of the concept of tribe in their analysis of Iraqi culture. As Belcher observes:

> Because of their indeterminacy and slipperiness, Western militaries have made it a central task to develop methods and technologies for identifying, verifying, and ordering these spaces with the desire to harness, and perhaps stabilize their complexity—or at least make them more predictable (Belcher 2013:101).

The tribe concept was projected onto Iraq by Western experts as a mechanism through which Iraqi society could be made legible, interpreted and ultimately pacified. In this way, tribe can be understood as a technology deployed in order to stabilize complexity and render the battlespace more predictable for US military forces. The manner in which tribe was deployed reflected an instrumentalization of an old anthropological approach to culture, and served to produce a crude binary dichotomy between the people of Iraq and those in the West. The image of the native subject produced by these discourses of tribe bore remarkable similarity the theory of nativism in the 19th century British colonial discourses of indirect rule. This was demonstrated through the exploration of HTS arguments regarding the potential utility of leveraging traditional tribal dispute resolution mechanisms and tribal governance structures in support of US military objectives in Iraq. Tribe is presented as an essential, authentic Iraqi essence, which could serve as the ideal traditional antidote to the turmoil and fracture of identity driven sectarian violence. These discourses produce an image of the Iraqi tribe as ancient, timeless and static, in direct opposition to the Western notions of progress, innovation and change. Furthermore, the analysis depiction of Iraqi tribal structure as a clearly ordered, segmentary hierarchy with power concentrated in the hands of individual leaders and figures of authority. The notion of centralised power had a dramatic influence upon US military engagement strategies in Iraq, and Key Leader Engagements [KLEs] became the go-to approach to when leveraging the local population in support of military objectives. Once again this bears a remarkable similarity to Mamdani's descriptions of the British colonial instrumentalization of the tribe concept in 19th century Africa, where colonial governments would arbitrability invest authority in male leaders they designated to be tribal chiefs (Mamdani 2012b). Roberto Gonzalez describes the potentially deleterious outcomes of this approach when he comments:

> There is yet another assumption worth examining. As I noted above, war planners generally assume that US military personnel are dealing with 'tribal' leaders embedded within clearly ranked hierarchical political systems in which 'sheiks' are in firm control of their subjects. This is a disastrous assumption because it excludes the ordinary 'tribesman' from the decision-making process and erroneously suggests that the 'sheiks' are entirely responsible for the actions of 'their' people. Consequently, the money for Sunni 'Awakening' and 'Sons of Iraq' groups is channelled exclusively through these leaders, reinforcing the 'tribal' model imposed upon them from above. In short, the hierarchical 'tribe' with highly concentrated leadership may well become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Gonzalez 2009d:18).

In contrast to the work in Iraq, HTS research in Afghanistan largely abandoned the tribe concept as an analytical tool. Unlike in Iraq, where HTS research identified clearly defined tribal structures to serve as a counterpoint to the fracture and chaos of sectarian violence, HTS researchers writing on Afghanistan bemoaned the nebulous and mutable nature of Afghan tribe. The Afghan concept of qwam – oft translated directly as tribe – was actually quite ambiguous as a social form and the innate flexibility of the term allows it to actively facilitate 'strategic manipulations of identity' (Tapper 1983:27) In decrying the utility of the tribe concept, Holt observes:

> The very plasticity of this form of mutating social organization allows for functions and structures to vary in the face of changing circumstances and challenges from the outside and inside the qawm (Holt 2012:28).

Holt's critique of the tribe concept as a unit of analysis in Afghanistan, along with the other examples considered in this study, demonstrate the clear influence of new anthropological approaches to culture in their descriptions and understandings of the concept. However, instead of pursuing the implications of these new cultural approaches for military engagement in Afghanistan, HTS researchers jettison the tribe concept altogether, and in its place offer their own alternative generalisable schema of Afghan social structure. Thus, despite the move away from tribe, the HTS research on Afghanistan considered in this study represents precisely the same instrumentalization

of old culture-based understandings as are seen all throughout the cultural turn and HTS more generally. How can we account for this persistence of old anthropological culture? According to Robert Albro, the answer is relatively straightforward. In addressing why HTS approaches to culture diverge so drastically to those approaches dominant within contemporary social science, Albro observes:

> Looking forward, at least as problematic is the vision of 'culture' that too often appears to be promoted by the work of HTTs in the field, obliged to sell themselves to the military unit with which they are embedded. This can quickly become a decontextualized cultural 'content knowledge', distinct from any particular social scientific method, that is at once controllable and a variable for manipulation, itemization and archival stockpiling, with the promise of a dubious certainty of definitively 'mapping the cultural terrain' (2010:23).

It is precisely the obligation to 'sell themselves to the military unit' and the extent to which military imperatives are the driver of HTS research that explains the persistence of old culture approaches. The ultimate purpose of cultural knowledge is to make an unintelligible space intelligible, and in doing so bring predictability to complexity, and stability to flux. HTS research proposes to harness understandings of 'native' identity which reflect a true, traditional essence of people and place in order to remedy the chaos of insurgency and sectarian conflict. In the case of Afghanistan, the tribe – when characterised by flexibility, malleability and an absence of clearly defined structures – is ill-suited to provide the anchor to tradition assumed to be necessary to pacify and stabilise the 'native' population. So, in its place, alternative schemas such as neo-patrimonialism or village-ism are proffered as truer, more accurate models of traditional native culture in the hope they may fulfil this function. Ultimately, the endurance of old anthropological culture is explained by its practical utility as a technology of Western intervention. Therein lies the fundamental contradiction at the heart of the Human Terrain System, and indeed all projects of expert driven Western domination: despite an unwavering commitment to the veracity of knowledge produced through method and reason, and a belief in the unique capacity of the expert to produce knowledge as 'truth', the extent to which such knowledge is truly representative of an objective reality is largely irrelevant to power. Truth only matters insofar as specific ideas about what is true can be instrumentalized to order the world and manipulate it towards the realization of specific ends. All the schemas put forward to conceptualise Afghan and Iraqi society –

tribalism, villageism, neopatrimonialism etc – have two things clearly in common: firstly, they are produced as a particular image of an objective reality with a view to determining what strategies and actions are most conducive to the pacification and domination of the populations under scrutiny. And secondly, despite the apparent incompatibility of these schemas as competing depictions of reality, they are all predicated upon an assumption that 'native' societies – in this case Afghanistan and Iraq – are possessive of an innate, essential cultural form which is ancient, resistant to change, collectivist, and deeply rooted in custom.

This research has sought to contribute to the reflexive inversion of the social scientific gaze to interrogate the role of academic knowledge production - and social scientific research in particular – in processes of pacification, domination and governance. The selection of the Human Terrain System, as an explicit example of academic collaboration with military forces in the prosecution of Western imperialist intervention, was deliberate insofar as it rendered starkly visible the relationship between power and academic knowledge production. However, the intention was never to simply vilify the participation of social scientists in military projects, or juxtapose their work with an ideal civilian applied social research that is independent, benign and disentangled from the functioning of power. In many ways, the question of whether it is appropriate for social scientists to participate in military projects is a red herring, which distracts us from questioning the very practice of social scientific research more broadly - its function as a technology of power and governance, its role in the subjugation of marginalised knowledges, and its treatment of concepts such as culture, tribe, and race. HTS, as a particularly egregious example of weaponised social research, rendered visible many problematic aspects of the practice of research which can be obscured in the case of projects which, on the surface, appear self-evidently benign or altruistic. Many of the findings of this study can be directly applied to the critical interrogation and understanding of research practices in areas such as peacekeeping, international development, migration studies, conflict resolution etc. As Lisa Tuhiwai Smith has observed:

> Many researchers, academics and project workers may see the benefits of their particular research projects as serving a greater good 'for mankind', or serving a specific emancipatory goal for an oppressed community. But belief in the ideal that benefiting mankind is indeed a primary outcome of scientific research is as much a reflection of

> ideology as it is of academic training. It becomes so taken for granted that many researchers simply assume that they as individuals embody this ideal and are natural representatives of it when they work with other communities (2008:2).

An essential ongoing task for all researchers must be the rigorous and relentless interrogation of what we are doing when we engage in research, and why we are doing it.

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