



Executive Summary

Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press



TRAINING HUMANS FOR THE HUMAN DOMAIN

Dr. Steve Tatham
with
Mr. Keir Giles

Human behavior is at the center of all conflict. Understanding principles of why groups behave in specific ways, coupled with regional, cultural, and linguistic nuances of specific regions and areas, provides essential leverage in preventing conflict, or, if necessary, prevailing once conflict has begun. Despite the experience of over a decade of counterinsurgency warfare, these skill sets are still under-represented in conventional military training. This monograph argues that this should change if the armed forces of the United States and its allies are successfully to face future global security challenges. It further offers an outline for educating U.S. and allied service personnel in fundamental human domain skills, highlighting specific elements of psychology, theology, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics as key requirements for the understanding of human terrain.

Experience from Afghanistan and Iraq has demonstrated the vital nature of operating in the human domain for all levels of seniority, with conclusions relevant far beyond counterinsurgency operations in the Islamic world. Any situation where adversary actions are described as “irrational” demonstrates a fundamental failure in understanding the human dimension of the conflict. It follows that, where states and their leaders act in a manner that in the United States is perceived as irrational, this too betrays a lack of human knowledge. This monograph therefore examines specific aspects of avoiding mirroring, in the sense of projecting U.S. or Western assumptions onto a non-Western actor, and therefore failing correctly to assess the options available to that actor. It puts forward principles for operating in the human domain that can be extended to consideration of other actors

who are adversarial to the United States and whose decisionmaking calculus sits in a different framework from our own—including such major states as Russia and China.

The monograph argues specifically for stronger Red Team input into planning and decisionmaking. These Red Teams need to be equipped with expert levels of knowledge of all the social sciences discussed—as applied to their target subject—in order to provide reliable and well-founded simulations of adversary decision processes. But over and above this, familiarity with the same principles should be far more widespread both among junior military personnel engaged in any kind of interaction with human allies or adversaries, and among the senior audience assimilating Red Team input into planning. This is because this input will, by its very nature, be counterintuitive for individuals not specializing in the region concerned. Commanders will receive advice that appears to make no sense, in isolation from their other data streams and apparently contradicting them. The ability to assess this counterintuitive input grounded in an alien culture and language is a key issue of education and requires a place in senior officer education planning.

More information about the programs of the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) and U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Press may be found on the Institute’s homepage at www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil.

Organizations interested in reprinting this or other SSI and USAWC Press executive summaries should contact the Editor for Production via email at SSI_Publishing@conus.army.mil. All organizations granted this right must include the following statement: "Reprinted with permission of the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College."



This Publication



SSI Website



USAWC Website