

## SECTION 4

### THE U.S. MILITARY AND U.S. ANTHROPOLOGY

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Should anthropologists conduct research in war zones for the use of the U.S. military? Should anthropologists play other roles within the U.S. military? Can anthropologists justify a collective refusal to take part? The recent cultural turn in the U.S. military has raised these questions acutely for U.S. anthropologists. The essays in this section offer unambiguous, although differing, answers to these core ethical, political, and practical questions. These questions are new, but they resonate with long-standing disciplinary dilemmas. The mission of anthropology is again at stake.

American anthropology struggled to redefine itself in the early 1970s, amid prolonged and gruesome counterinsurgent war in Vietnam and, in the wake of decolonization, the worldwide proliferation of new political movements, both inside and outside of the new nation-states that had transformed the political context of anthropological research. Many American anthropologists at this time called for an anthropological research that was politically “relevant” (see Hymes 1999 [1972]; Stocking 2001, 278–9; see also Asad 1973). These calls for relevance presaged the attention given to politics and power in their many forms by the anthropology of the following decades. But although American anthropologists of this time sought relevance for their studies of politics in what was called during the cold war, the “third world,” national politics in

the United States remained principally concerned with the first and second worlds, locked in their epochal struggle for domination of each other and for the future of the third.

For all the obvious insanity of a struggle that littered the world with nuclear weapons destined to outlast any possible sociopolitical conditions for their domestication, the first and second worlds were understood in U.S. institutions of governance and war-making to be essentially rational and modern, while the third world was understood to be ruled by culture, irrationality, and tradition. As Carl Pletsch shows in a seminal 1981 essay, the division of labor in the American social sciences of the cold war era was organized by these orienting categories: rational and modern versus cultural and traditional (first and second versus third) and free versus ideological (first versus second). Because they were rational and thus predictable, the first and second worlds could be studied by nomothetic social sciences: political science, economics, and sociology. Idiographic anthropology would have to be content with description, not prediction, and with the third world, not the first or second that so dominated the policy agendas of U.S. policy makers. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot later suggested, for this reason, anthropologists of the period found themselves trapped in a familiar “savage slot” that had previously been filled by anthropologists of the colonial era. And, although many American anthropologists in the latter decades of the twentieth century sought political relevance for their work and produced work of enormous political insight, American anthropology did not, for the most part, achieve the kinds of relevance to broader politics that it sought.

In the twenty-first century, a new kind of relevance has come knocking on American anthropology’s door. Montgomery McFate, the high-profile proponent of an anthropologized counterinsurgency, made the case for anthropology’s relevance in a 2005 essay entitled “The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture”:

Although the United States armed and trained for 50 years to defeat a Cold War adversary, Soviet tanks will never roll through the Fulda Gap. The foe the United States faces today—and is likely to face for years to come—is non-Western in orientation, transnational in scope, non-hierarchical in structure, and clandestine in approach; and it operates outside of the context of the nation-state. Neither al Qaeda nor insurgents in Iraq are fighting a Clausewitzian war, where armed conflict is a rational extension of politics by other means. These adversaries neither think nor act like nation-states. Rather, their form of warfare, organizational structure, and motivations are determined by the society and the culture from which they come. (McFate 2005b)

In McFate's assessment, the societies and cultures of traditional anthropological inquiry, conceived during the cold war principally as objects of global military struggle, have here become the source of global war's subjects, the new nemesis. The logical conclusion of this understanding of "the foe the United States faces today" and "their form of warfare" is that the U.S. military must call upon anthropologists for their interpretation (still with reason only on the side of the West). This has all occurred in precisely the terms that one might have predicted in 1981, with the help of Pletsch's essay, had one known that the ideology of the cold war would be followed by the ideology of the long war against parts of the third world itself. In the imaginaries that orient U.S. military deployments, the hyper-rationally sinister and atheist communist bureaucrats of yesterday have been replaced today by irrationally violent and freedom-hating fanatics. And in a reinscription of the cold war division of intellectual labor, the ostensible human science of the irrational and unpredictable, anthropology, is called in the United States to more prominent and pressing duty than it ever was during the cold war.

This volume embraces divergent viewpoints, with which we the editors, ourselves not always of one mind, sometimes disagree. And it is precisely through this diversity of perspective that we intend to demonstrate the limits of keeping anthropology mired in the savage slot. Many policy makers still seem to believe that anthropology's only role in informing military theory and practice should be that of translator of the ostensible irrationalities of the human terrain that populates U.S. military theaters. Whether this role is appropriate is one of the questions hotly debated in this section. However, such translation is certainly not the only kind of role anthropology can and should play.

The utilitarian conceptions of rationality and tradition underlying cold war divisions of intellectual labor were grounded in a modernization theory blind to many of its own assumptions: the policies of cold war Washington and Moscow were shaped by culture as much as the practices of insurgents in contemporary Fallujah and Tora Bora. Indeed, this very division of intellectual labor ignores a century of anthropological research that has shown all rationality to be mediated by culture—not merely the rationalities of the United States' military adversaries. This volume pursues the culturally mediated rationalities of global counterinsurgency, order, and violence in the world of Pax Americana; this section pursues the relations of anthropologists with the U.S. military.

The papers in the previous section, section 3, discussed the historical foundations of counterinsurgency theory and practice. The worldview orienting counterinsurgency, and the use and misuse of anthropology in counterinsurgency, are discussed in essays throughout the volume. But the essays in this

section do not limit their focus to discussion of underlying intellectual and political issues. Rather, they directly address the contemporary dilemma for U.S. anthropology as a discipline. Each writer is a professional anthropologist, with a strong view about what, now, is to be done by American anthropologists in response to the U.S. military's call for anthropological participation. The discussion here is serious, and often heated.

This section includes the only paper in the volume that was not part of the April 2008 conference, or the American Anthropological Association panels that led to this conference. In order to gain greater insight into the Human Terrain System (HTS) as it now exists, we asked a Human Terrain Team anthropologist, Marcus Griffin, to read the conference papers and contribute his own account and defense of the program. Rather than directly engage the debates that inform the other three papers in this section, Griffin provides a detailed description of the HTS program as he has experienced it in Iraq, presenting his own view of its moral purpose in his discussion of his operational activities. Griffin's essay, the last to be written for the volume, is now the first in this section and provides an empirical point of departure.

Roberto Gonzalez and David Price have been important public voices in the efforts to organize professional dissent against anthropological participation in the U.S. military's counterinsurgency operations. Their papers here offer thorough critiques of anthropological engagement in HTS as well as arguments for the importance and power of an anthropology that is independent from involvement with military agencies. Kerry Fosher continues her articulate public defense of anthropologists working within U.S. military institutions, focusing on the differences made by anthropological voices, from the teaching academies to the battlefields themselves. Fosher's essay is an argument for pluralism in anthropological engagement. Fosher argues for a big tent approach that extends institutional ethics codes to guide military ethnographers, while Price and Gonzalez document the actual consequences when anthropologists serve military purposes. All engage difficult questions about the ethics of professional practice.

In our April 2008 conference, these papers and the papers of the next section were mixed together in a two-session discussion of "Counterinsurgency and the Study of Culture." We hope that readers will find it more helpful to divide these papers into two sets: this group that orients directly to the issue of whether, and how, professional anthropologists should participate in the U.S. military and a second group that reopens ethnographic discussion of the construction and destruction of conscience in U.S. military deployments. In our conference, we put the papers under one rubric to ensure that discussion of the most practical and political of questions was mindful of its most imme-

mediate ethnographic context. For this volume, we invite readers to consider all the papers together but also want to serve readers seeking conclusions about the practical implications. Where anthropologists should draw the lines concerning protection of and service to their profession, protection of and service to their country, and protection of and service to their informants are not the only questions demanding better answers in the present moment. More generally, the authors in this volume seek many kinds of positive contributions that political anthropology can make. But the lines need to be drawn, and these papers address key questions directly.