Dangerous Liaisons

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The Subcontractor

Counterinsurgency, Militias, and the New Common Ground in Social and Military Science

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> You have the green light.... You can't just shoot anybody. No vengeance.... But the bad guys...I don't care. Go get them.
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> —*Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, US Army, to Sunni leaders mobilizing community defense units in Rasheed, Baghdad. Quoted in the* Washington Post, *July 27, 2007*

In the Global War on Terror (GWOT) imaginary, Africa is dangerous. The continent's so-called failed states and ungovernable conflict zones are spaces of unlimited threat. They are the "terra incognita" in which "dark networks" proliferate (Renzi 2006a). Liberia, Somalia, Mauritania, and a host of others appear to combine poverty, religious extremism, ethnic nationalism, weak governance, and vast natural resource wealth in ways that observers find dangerously unacceptable to global security. Yet US and European security sector strategists concerned about Africa labor in the shadow of the 1993 debacle of US operations in Somalia and in a policy environment with little understanding of African affairs and little appetite for heavy investment in the continent. Military planners must innovate when it comes to Africa and its threats—and they must do it on the cheap.

Witness AFRICOM. With little fanfare, the US military's Africa Command became fully operational on October 1, 2008. For the first time, AFRICOM makes sub-Saharan Africa the exclusive focus of an entire apparatus of US military services. But of the six regions that make up the military's unified command structure, AFRICOM is unique. It hosts relatively few US troops

and its focus is "civilian-military partnerships."[1] Half of AFRICOM's staff is civilian, not military. One of its two deputy commanders is a State Department officer. Its mission is a complex mix of training support, disaster and humanitarian relief efforts, development assistance, and economic projects. "Bases? Garrisons? It's not about that," said Gen. William Ward, the new AFRICOM commander, in an interview at the operational launch. "We are trying to prevent conflict, as opposed to having to react to a conflict" (Shankar 2008:10; see also McMichael [2008]). AFRICOM, it would seem, is a bold experiment. But it is one that military leaders believe "could change how the American government does business around the globe" (Bennet 2008).

I begin this chapter with Africa and with the largely unnoticed inauguration of AFRICOM because it illustrates an important absence in discussions about the relationship between social science and the global security sector today. For the past few years, that conversation has been dominated by military programs like the Human Terrain System (HTS) and by concerns over mercenary anthropology in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The emphasis is on embedded scholars and the way the military seeks to employ academics for strategic cultural insights. As important as those debates are, they overshadow more ambiguous contexts in which social scientists encounter the security sector. What these debates miss is that the military has in recent years grown more amorphous and harder to locate. So too have the field sites that are in or out of its purview.

In this chapter I argue that changes in US military philosophy and structure make it more likely that in the future, scholarly and military research will overlap at the level of the subcontractor. What I mean by this is that field researchers are most likely to find themselves in circumstances in which the labor of war and the knowledge production about war have been outsourced. Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are now central to the US military mission worldwide, a development with profound ramifications for local communities and for community-based social sciences. COIN strategy increasingly seeks to mobilize local populations to provide for their own security or to assist regular troops in doing so. This greatly expands the number of social scientists, particularly anthropologists, whose work will overlap with US and other security apparatuses and shifts the kinds of demands that will be placed on scholarly knowledge. Overtly "helping the military win" is the extreme case of social scientists' relationship to military science. But it is one that doesn't necessarily address the practical, theoretical, and ethical challenges most ethnographers face when they come into contact with, or are asked to serve as, the subcontractors of war.

Here I take the proliferation of militias in the recent conflict in West Africa's Mano River region as emblematic of the future overlap between social and military science. In Sierra Leone and Liberia local community defense forces received considerable training, materiel, and logistical support from a range of international actors interested in the outcome of the war but unwilling or unable to commit conventional state or multinational combat forces. This was an outsourced war. The result was the militarization of an entire region. In a profound reorganization of the social, economic, and political landscape, young men were made available for rapid assembly and deployment wherever and whenever necessary, fighting as part-time combatants against a highly decentralized, networked enemy.

This mode of outsourcing violence to local communities is increasingly important to how US military thinkers approach global security. Although expanded greatly as a result of US president George W. Bush's poorly planned wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the strategy of devolving security to local actors seems also to be central to the post-Bush "soft power" strategy of the United States. For social scientists, this means the figure of the embedded professional researcher grows obsolete even as programs like the Human Terrain System are in their infancy. The future promises less demand for the kind of "culture knowledge" that an embedded researcher can provide and fewer of the large deployments of combat troops that gave rise to Human Terrain Teams (HTT) in Afghanistan and Iraq. On one hand, this avoids some of the more pressing contemporary debates over the propriety of working "for" the military. On the other, it presents a different set of quandaries—and possibilities—for what it means to do politically committed and ethical fieldwork.

THE ALREADY OBSOLETE EMBEDDED ANTHROPOLOGIST

"Something mysterious is going on inside the US Department of Defense," writes Montgomery McFate (2005:24a), an anthropologist working with the US military. Top US military officials such as Army Maj. Gen. Robert Scales, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and Central Command Chief Gen. David Petraeus have begun to argue for a new emphasis within the military on cultural understanding—or what one author calls "ethnographic intelligence" (Renzi 2006a). In a survey of US military relations with local social actors in Iraq, Lt. Col. Michael Eisenstadt (2007:174) writes that "cultural knowledge is the ultimate in force protection."[2] More poetically, a *Military Review* article on HTS opens: "Conducting military operations in a low-intensity conflict without ethnographic and cultural intelligence is like building a house without using your thumbs" (Kipp et al. 2006:1). This is

indeed a radical shift. For decades the preoccupation within the military has been technological innovation and the hard sciences. But if the war in Vietnam put a damper on military theorists' interest in foreign cultures, the war in Iraq has rekindled it (M. McFate 2005a).

The Human Terrain System is the most visible exemplar of this cultural turn, putting professional anthropologists at the heart of the paradigm shift. Within the discipline HTS has been the focus of debates over how scholars relate to government security forces at this historical moment. (As Ben-Ari points out in this volume, these are particularly *American* debates, due not only to the hegemony of the US military but also to the hegemony of the US academy.) The program embeds professional ethnographers in small teams (the HTTs) of mixed civilian / military personnel to collect data on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq (see Ferguson, this volume; González 2009a; and Kipp et al. 2006 for more detailed descriptions of the HTS program). The underlying principle is that for US military forces, understanding the cultural contexts of an area of operations pays off in multiple ways. In contrast to the "drain the swamp"[3] approach to counterinsurgency that has dominated military thinking, the new culturalists argue that understanding local norms generates better intelligence, wins hearts and minds, and makes US combat operations more effective and more precise.

The narrow definition of culture at work here and the usefulness of various forms of cultural knowledge have been the subjects of a great deal of commentary, particularly as they relate to HTS and to the new *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (see González 2007b, 2008b; M. McFate 2007; M. McFate and Fondacaro 2008; Price 2007). The ethics of HTS work has been even more fiercely contested. That participation in HTS violates the American Anthropological Association (AAA) code of ethics seems to be the view of an overwhelming majority of AAA members, though a vocal minority has argued that the HTS ultimately benefits "researched" communities by reducing the lethality of military operations. The fact that at least some members of HTTs are armed has generated profound discomfort and raises the question of whether HTS ethnographic research can be conducted with subjects' informed consent. Even when unarmed, the HTTs' military uniforms and armed escorts have led many scholars to question whether future researchers will be negatively affected as social science work in general is associated with military operations.

These are extremely important debates. There is no doubt that the consequences are serious for scholars throughout the social sciences, perhaps most notably in anthropology. The outcome of this disciplinary

self-examination stands to reshape not only how ethnographic research is done and by whom, but how it is taught and how it is disseminated.

Nevertheless, it is a debate that has been defined largely by the exceptional case. Although the numbers are hard to pin down, the HTS at present involves very few personnel in very specific circumstances.[4] As a number of contributors to this volume point out, the classroom, rather than the front lines, is a much more likely place for academy-based anthropologists to encounter security personnel.

More importantly, given its current configuration, it seems unlikely that the HTS is a sustainable program. Despite the fact that the program is in its infancy at the time of this writing (it is still referred to as a "proof of concept" program on its website), despite the fact that its funding has increased, and despite the fact that it seems so perfectly in tune with the military leadership's new appreciation for culture, it is a program that is ineffective—and strangely anachronistic.

Embedded anthropologists have to date been poorly trained and are often much less knowledgeable about the communities in which they work than are the soldiers who have been stationed there for considerably longer (Ephron and Spring 2008). Serious questions have been raised about early glowing reports of massive reductions in violence and improved relations with local communities (Rohde 2007). What's more, the various armed services are expanding their own capacity for cultural training. Add the backlash from the AAA and other professional organizations, and one can guess that in the future the military will rely on its own personnel to do on-the-ground ethnography rather than bringing in professional civilian ethnographers.

Indeed, it is instructive to read the counterinsurgency literature in military journals like *Military Review* and note their lack of emphasis on civilian researchers in their calls for rethinking counterinsurgency warfare. In his article on the need for ethnographic intelligence, for example, Lt. Col. Fred Renzi (2006a) elaborates a proposal for ethnographers and culture analysts based out of US embassies but focuses exclusively on training US military personnel for this task. In his analysis of "indirect" military action in the Philippines, Col. Gregory Wilson (2006) writes of special forces operations in which small military units trained in local languages and cultural practices (and without embedded civilian ethnographers) surveyed local sociopolitical environments as they supported the Armed Forces of the Philippines in counterinsurgency measures. US Marine Corps Maj. Ben Connable (2009), in a forceful critique of the HTS program, points out that the US military already trains personnel for the tasks envisioned by HTS and does so in a

more organic and sustainable way (see also Selmeski 2007). The fact that the anthropologists most vocal in support of the HTS program and military culture training in general are largely teaching in the service academies, and not training civilian anthropologists, suggests that the military services will be looking inward rather than outward for future expertise.[5]

But what makes the HTS program even more peripheral to the field of encounter between scholars and the security sector is the changing nature of war and the military. There is another trajectory for the US military's culturalist turn that does not lead to HTS as its logical conclusion and that is more in keeping with other trends in military science. And that trend is toward deploying local surrogate forces to do the work of security and war.

A REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

The large troop deployments that characterized the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are not the future of American war. Despite the criticism of US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's minimalist strategy for the Iraq occupation, there is an ever greater emphasis put on networks, swarming, and indirect and counterinsurgency warfare over the conventional models of massive, centralized, and unilateral military operations. The so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) places a premium on high-technology weapons and a smaller, more flexible, and decentralized military. Andrew Latham (2002:240) summarizes RMA thinking:

> Simply stated, proponents maintain that as the RMA unfolds, "God" will no longer be on the side of the "big battalions." Rather, military advantage will more likely accrue to those who restructure their military forces around rapidly expanding reconfigurable "virtual task forces" comprising small "agile units" that can be quickly created, dissolved and recombined as specific missions and battlefield dynamics require.

Combining high-tech weaponry with productive human relationships with "locals" is intended to reduce the need for massive numbers of US troops and heavy materiel. While there is a great deal of discussion about what this more flexible military might look like, there seems to be little doubt that the nature of war fighting is changing. COIN operations, networked warfare, fourth-generation warfare—all of these new approaches to combat suggest that the US military is increasingly shying away from a model in which its mission is to drop massively into "terra incognita" and effectively deploy there—a model for which the HTS system is designed to supply quick, reliable, comparable, and compoundable data.

Instead, "the mission" is increasingly to deploy indirectly, working with and through more knowledgeable and better positioned surrogate forces and doing so in a way that complicates the war/peace divide. In his article in *Military Review*, Wilson (2006) argued that in a successful counterinsurgency operation, small units of American special forces should work in peacetime and "invisibly" through local forces. "Therefore, the US WOT [War on Terrorism] strategy should emphasize working directly 'through, by, and with' indigenous forces and building their capacity to conduct effective operations against common enemies" (Wilson 2006:38).[6] The trend is toward finding local partners and outsourcing the labor of war.

This is not, of course, entirely new in military history. British and French forces were bolstered by local fighters in their colonial territories, and the US military has over the years provided more or less clandestine support to local factions around the globe. What marks this moment as a revolution in US military affairs is the scale of such outsourcing; its erasure of the war/peace divide so that COIN is fought "across the political, social, and military spectrums" (Hammes 1994:35); and its centrality to military doctrine. The language of the most recent US Department of Defense *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDRR*) echoes Wilson's—and makes it the "official" view of the US military:

> Maintaining a long-term, low-visibility presence in many areas of the world where U.S. forces do not traditionally operate will be required. Building and leveraging partner capacity will also be an absolute essential part of this approach, and the employment of surrogates will be a necessary method for achieving many goals. Working indirectly with and through others, and thereby denying popular support to the enemy, will help to transform the character of conflict. In many cases, U.S. partners will have greater local knowledge and legitimacy with their own people and can thereby more effectively fight terrorist networks. [United States Department of Defense 2006c:23]

Two points are crucial to note. Firstly, the outsourcing of security envisioned in what Martin Shaw (2005) calls "the new Western way of war" is partly predicated on the idea that local forces are better able to understand appropriate cultural logics of violence. For example, John Arquilla (2003), a professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School and one of the chief theorists of netwar (networked warfare), has argued that the US military should adopt the strategy of recruiting local "pseudo-gangs" that

the British used against anticolonial movements like the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya.[7] Such surrogate forces, the argument goes, are effective because they fight the way the enemy fights. This mirroring approach to counterinsurgency is rendered as military doctrine in the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*:

> By mid-tour, U.S. forces should be working closely with local forces, training or supporting them and building an indigenous security capability. The natural tendency is to create forces in a U.S. image. This is a mistake. Instead, local HN [host nation] forces need to mirror the enemy's capabilities and seek to supplant the insurgent's role.[8] [United States Army and Marine Corps 2007:298–299]

Local forces, according to the more radical strains of this thinking, are not only better culturally equipped but are free of the legal or moral constraints that prevent the US military from effectively combating insurgent forces. This has become something of a cause for the most conservative (but influential) voices in security analysis since 2001. Writers like Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute, journalist and theorist Robert Kaplan, and Richard Perle, head of the Defense Policy Board, argue that it is the nature of asymmetrical warfare as waged by Al-Qaeda and other networks to "augment their power relative to Western countries simply by eschewing legal responsibilities" (Rubin 2007:4; see also Kaplan 2003). Bound by a commitment to the United Nations, the Geneva Conventions, and other international protocols for the conduct of war, the US and allied state armies, these theorists argue, are hampered in their ability to defeat non-state armies. Local surrogate forces, by contrast, face no such restrictions and are therefore considerably more effective (not to mention cheaper). One consequence of this reliance on the local knowledge of surrogate forces is that the kind of cultural knowledge embedded civilian ethnographers can supply is unnecessary. It is redundant at best. At worst it is a liability.

The second key point I wish to emphasize here is that the local partners in question might be, but are not necessarily, the official militaries of recognized states. Although Wilson's case study is on the Armed Forces of the Philippines, it is worth noting that he repeatedly speaks of alliances with "indigenous or surrogate" forces rather than with national militaries. The same holds true for the 2006 *QDRR* and the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*. In fact, the abstract language of partnerships, surrogates, and indigeneity appears throughout both official military publications and the

language of security sector strategists and observers. This is not terribly surprising, given that the US government views the security services of a number of so-called rogue nations and failed states as complicit in the operations of non-state networks like Al-Qaeda. The upshot is that a great deal of the investment of US military resources is currently dedicated to the cultivation of local forces, with no a priori assumption that the army of the state is the force most suitable for that aid.

What this amounts to in cases where the official state army is not the most reliable or desirable partner for the US military is the militarization of other sociopolitical formations, or the creation of new, militarized sodalities. As Renzi (2006a:16–17) puts it, drawing from Anna Simons, the concern of military culturalists is increasingly with indigenous modes of mobilization.

The Awakening movement in Iraq is the most high profile recent exemplar. Begun in the summer of 2005 in Anbar province, Awakening groups amounted to the arming of local militias to patrol neighborhoods, guard sensitive infrastructure, and hunt insurgent fighters and cells. US military personnel in Iraq have referred to Awakening units as "security contractors" and even as "little Iraqi Blackwaters" (the private security company infamous for the September 2007 massacre at Nisour Square in Baghdad) (see Tyson 2007). By the end of 2007 there were estimated to be between 65,000 and 80,000 members of such ad hoc militarized formations in Iraq (Rubin and Cave 2007). Most often these Awakening units are organized along ethnic or "tribal" lines, or what amounts to the arming of sectarian factions to fight other ethnically affiliated insurgent groups. In his summary of the lessons learned from the US military's engagement with Iraq's social structures, Lieutenant Colonel Eisenstadt (2007:29) writes that if Iraq is ever stabilized, it will be in large measure due to the "leveraging of Iraq's tribes and tribal networks" in mobilizations such as the Anbar Awakening.

There is every reason to think that these mobilizations, working in conjunction with or on behalf of small units of US security operatives, will be the primary actors in COIN operations of the future. Understanding the subcontracted mode of warfare represented by the Awakening movement will be critical to understanding the foreseeable future of global security—and the new common ground of social and military science.

I turn now to another example of such community mobilizations, an unlikely one to be sure, but nevertheless a case study capable of shedding light on the mechanisms by which social networks become militarized and the consequences for scholars and strategists when they do.

A LABORATORY OF THE FUTURE

The war in Sierra Leone officially began on March 27, 1991, with a small invasion force crossing the eastern border with Liberia. Though it launched its campaign with only a small contingent of Sierra Leonean dissidents and regional mercenaries, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) inaugurated a decade of violence. For a war in a small country seemingly so peripheral to world politics and the global economy, the conflict in Sierra Leone involved an incredible array of international actors and networks.

Most obvious was the RUF's relationship to the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a rebel force headed by Charles Taylor. Taylor and other NPFL leaders, along with a handful of the RUF leadership, were part of an amorphous cadre of West African dissidents, and European and Lebanese businessmen who circulated throughout the region during the 1980s. These were individuals and institutions for whom the war on both sides of the Sierra Leone–Liberia border created opportunities to profit from the unregulated trade in diamonds, timber, rubber, and gold. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia were arguably the first of the post–cold war "new wars" or "resource wars," conflicts that redefined the nature of warfare to include the violent activities of warlords and quasi-criminal, transnational networks.[9]

The Mano River War (a term that encompasses the fighting in both Sierra Leone and Liberia) was also unique for the major role played by an African armed intervention force. The Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was a largely Nigerian peacekeeping force deployed first in Liberia and then in Sierra Leone. With the United Nations, the United States, and European countries unwilling to deploy their own forces as peacekeepers or peace enforcers until very late in the conflict, Nigeria spearheaded the first regional intervention force after the cold war, to which the United Nations agreed to be a secondary, supporting partner. As Herbert Howe (2001:131) notes in his analysis of ECOMOG, it was a move that calls into question the very meaning of sovereignty in Africa—but one that has been repeated by the African coalition intervening in Darfur and will likely continue under AFRICOM.

The domestic partners that these international forces found on the ground are the most significant for my purposes here. The *kamajoisia*, or Kamajors (the Anglicized and increasingly standardized name for mobilizations of kamajoisia), were a decentralized group of grassroots civil defense units that appeared in the early 1990s in southeastern Sierra Leone. Prior to the war the kamajoisia were specialized hunters in Mende

villages capable of harnessing occult forces to hunt large game and to protect communities from both natural and supernatural threats of the forest. They were also the only figures under customary chiefdom law authorized to carry firearms. As the war progressed in Sierra Leone and it became clear that the state army was unable, and in many cases unwilling, to protect rural communities from violent attacks, the Kamajors were the key figures around which young men mobilized to defend rural communities. Conducting patrols, ambushes, and intelligence gathering operations, the Kamajors rapidly expanded their numbers across the southeast, waging a low-intensity war against the rebels and often against the untrustworthy Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. As it gained popularity, participation in the Kamajors replaced the initiations that previously marked the passage from childhood to adulthood for some rural Mende males. In many areas the Kamajors' security presence was crucial to the conduct of trade, farming, water collection—the everyday modalities of village life in West Africa.

The nature of the Kamajors began to change in 1995. Though they received some support from the Sierra Leonean government from the earliest days, that support changed dramatically when the government hired a private military company, the South African Executive Outcomes (EO), to train the Sierra Leonean army and to assist in driving the rebels away from key sites. Finding the army a less than reliable partner, EO began training the Kamajors and offering them logistical assistance in their war with the RUF.

When a new democratically elected government was overthrown in 1997 by the state army, the Kamajors became an even more important factor in the war. As the primary domestic resistance to the military junta, their numbers rapidly expanded.[10] Kamajors around the country coordinated their activities—and received materiel—from the Nigerian ECOMOG forces. Now called the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), the irregular forces served as trackers, surrogate gunners, intelligence gatherers, and in many cases the forward operating units for ECOMOG and for a handful of former EO personnel who stayed on after its contract expired. Those forces were in turn supported and advised by US security contractors like Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) and by the military affairs officers at US and European embassies in the region. When the junta was overthrown a year later, the CDF was the government's only functioning security apparatus, despite its irregular status.

The CDF was officially disbanded at the end of the war in January 2002. By that time British forces and UN peacekeepers had deployed around the

country and taken on the task of training the new Sierra Leone Army, a force that included ex-combatants from both the CDF and the rebels. Talk of a territorial defense force that would institutionalize the CDF militias came to nothing, in large part due to fears that the CDF would overthrow the government it previously fought to restore. A poorly designed and executed disarmament program left thousands of former CDF fighters displaced and without work. Large numbers of demobilized fighters moved across the border with Liberia to work as mercenaries on that front of the war or labored in the violent and unregulated diamond mines of the east. In the former case, these mobile warriors were armed through US military assistance supplied by the Guinean government and then forwarded to the rebels. Many more ex-combatants deployed from rural communities to the cities to protect urban areas during the war were abandoned there. These young men lacked the capital—financial and social—to return to their villages. They currently live a precarious existence in the country's urban centers, "available" for recruitment by a diverse array of political and economic actors interested in utilizing their violence (see Christensen and Utas 2008; Hoffman 2007a). This highly mobile population of militarized and marginalized young men poses the greatest threat to regional stability in a highly volatile region.

Beginning in 2000 I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with CDF fighters in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. Much of this work consisted of interviews about earlier mobilizations and the cultural meanings of violence, masculinity, and the responsibilities of rural men to protect their communities. But perhaps even more important for what I present here, this research also involved living with combatants intermittently over an eight-year period as they cycled through regional conflict zones and various forms of labor. I spent considerable time in the primary CDF barracks in Freetown watching groups of young men navigate the impossible terrain of Sierra Leone's shattered economy, often by participating in networks of armed gangs that relied on the same patterns of mobilization that organized them as fighters. As the war ended in Sierra Leone, an underground railroad recruited experienced fighters as mercenary labor for a new Liberian rebel movement; moving with these young men across multiple international borders allowed for a firsthand look at how youth who began fighting with a community defense militia quickly became part of a violent regional labor pool. Researching the changing nature of violent deployment as a participant/observer made it clear just how easily these same young men could be made available to Sierra Leonean politicians and international commercial interests for the often violent work of political

campaigning or digging diamonds in the region's quasi-legal resource trade.[11]

What this ethnographic research suggests is that, though it seems removed from the center of the post-9/11 geopolitical world, Sierra Leone's history is a laboratory of the future. The Kamajors/CDF are exactly the kind of indigenous force envisioned as partners in the current strategic thinking of US military planners and commentators. They were without question the faction most "loyal" to the democratically elected (and US-friendly) government after 1996—certainly more so than the state army, which was notoriously corrupt and widely known to be colluding with the rebels.[12] As key social actors in the local cultural landscape, they had the respect and support of local communities. The "Kamajor" was an already recognizable figure, literally and figuratively, whose role it was to protect villages from outside threats. They were a logical choice around which to base a counterinsurgency strategy, well positioned to act on the kind of "ethnographic intelligence" seen as key to the new way of war. What's more, the Kamajors/CDF could by definition "mirror the enemy's capabilities" (in the language of the army counterinsurgency manual): everything from their occult powers to their particular modes of violence were crafted in response to the perceived threats posed by the RUF and the army.

Perhaps even more important, the Kamajors/CDF were structured along exactly the lines that the network theorists of war envision as most effective for counterinsurgency operations. The militia combined its "ethnographic intelligence" with a decentralized organization that allowed it to mobilize quickly wherever necessary. A truly grassroots organization, it materialized as needed throughout the country in response to specific threats. Though the CDF became more institutionalized as the war went on, local units never lost the capability to act independently, move quickly, and adjust themselves to rapidly changing circumstances and new threats. As a community-based outfit structured according to an existing social logic, the CDF could be wherever it needed to be. What the CDF amounted to was the militarization of everyday life and local communities such that they could be quickly mobilized and deployed as necessary in the interest of security.

In 2003 three members of the CDF were indicted by the UN-backed Special Court for war crimes in Sierra Leone.[13] Although it was widely acknowledged by human rights groups to have committed fewer abuses than other parties to the conflict, Kamajors/CDF units unquestionably enlisted child soldiers, executed prisoners of war and civilians, and, at the later stages, threatened to become a private army for local politicians. To

paraphrase Herbert Howe (2001), the CDF offered a highly ambiguous order—a force on the right side of history that played a key role in defending a democratically elected government and protecting civilian lives, but a force that nevertheless threatened the very stability it sought to ensure.

The Sierra Leone case is an interesting historical study for places like Iraq and Afghanistan, a point to which I will return below. But it is important to note that initiatives like AFRICOM and other trends in the reorganization of global security are laying the groundwork for continued mobilizations of exactly this kind. AFRICOM is part of a more generic discourse on African security that would like to see so-called African solutions to African problems. In other words, the kind of regional peacekeeping and peace enforcing operations epitomized by ECOMOG and by the African Union forces in Darfur are exactly the model being pushed to deal with future conflict zones—regional forces and ad hoc coalitions of the willing, with minimal advising and financial and logistical support from the United States, the United Nations, or contracted private security companies. If past experience is anything to judge by, these forces will not receive the levels of support necessary to operate effectively even as the demands on them grow. The upshot is that they will have to work with local surrogate forces like the Kamajors. In fact, since it is in keeping with the US military's culturalist turn to work with local surrogates, it is easy to imagine AFRICOM's trainers and security advisors encouraging its African partner forces to do just that. Jeremy Keenan (2008:20), in his review of AFRICOM's operational status, writes that "the indications are that AFRICOM's mission will be outsourced to 'contractors,'" notably private military companies (see also S. McFate 2008:118–119). No doubt he is correct, but it is the subcontractors of war like the Kamajors and the CDF who will likely do most of the fighting.

WHAT ROLE THE ANTHROPOLOGIST?

As US and other security forces expand their sphere of operations, as the groundwork is laid for peacetime collection of "ethnographic intelligence," and as indigenous mechanisms of mobilization become of greater interest to security services, many more anthropologists will find themselves working in areas of concern to military science or overlapping with actual areas of operation. Researchers conducting fieldwork on violence, civil conflict, masculinity, nationalism, or the "everyday" of conflict and postconflict zones will increasingly find themselves working in situations with ambiguous ties to the US security sector, but so too will researchers working on less immediately obvious issues or in less high visibility field

sites. The US Army counterinsurgency manual proviso to "engage the women, be cautious around the children" gives some indication of just how expansive the culturalist imaginary in military thinking really is.[14] If the future terrain of war is the mobilization of social networks and the militarization of everyday life, then the separate domains of military and social science begin to converge. This overlap potentially brings a much greater range of anthropologists into dialogue with the military than simply those who chose to work "for" it. The question is how?

The anthropologist as witness is an idea that has gained considerable traction in recent years as an ethically and politically responsible position. Bearing witness, Keenan (2008:20) writes in regard to the impact of AFRICOM operations across Africa, is a duty for anthropologists working on the continent and the primary contribution anthropologists can make "to the discipline and to the peoples of Africa." Given the record of US covert operations in North Africa that he documents, Keenan makes a strong case. At issue here is the violation of US laws, laws of sovereign states in the region, and international conventions governing warfare and state sovereignty. Keenan describes a number of incidents in which the US military in collaboration with the highly suspect state security apparatuses in Algeria have staged acts of destabilization in the Sahel that have contributed to a series of regional rebellions.

Again, if some part of the military intelligentsia is advocating for the circumvention of US and international laws as a strategy to wage the Global War on Terror (or, in the post-GWOT language of the Obama administration, to wield "soft power"), then it seems obvious that social scientists—both as social scientists and as citizens—are ethically obligated to make those abuses public. And as media outlets around the world have downsized their operations, particularly in Africa, anthropologists may be among the last cohort of observers capable of documenting such flagrant abuses.[15] Researchers with extensive experience on the ground are uniquely positioned to critically examine official claims made about COIN operations or anti-terror measures and bear a responsibility to go public when those measures are falsely represented and illegal. And there is every reason to assume that such boundaries are now regularly crossed.[16] When anthropologists take on this role, however, they would do well to follow the model of investigative journalism in at least one respect. It is possible to bear witness, document, and make public abuses by structures of power without concluding that such witnessing can only be done by two inherently adversarial camps. Investigative journalism as a profession (or as a discipline) is not by definition "antimilitary," even if some part of its mandate is

to expose abuses by the military or other organs of state power. The middle ground between embeddedness and adversary is one that journalists continuously wrestle with (and more so now than ever), but it remains the ideal and is maintained with some degree of success (for another perspective on this issue, see Anne Irwin's discussion in chapter 6, this volume). Social scientists can choose to occupy a similarly nuanced space. It is worth under-scoring that this is not a call for middle-of-the-road politics. I believe anthropologists in particular have a responsibility to advocate for the progressive, even radical politics that has been largely absent from public discourse in the United States. But this begins by writing and advocating in a way that targets *specific* abuses and does so with the necessary documentation to avoid unsupportable generalizations.

And it calls for recognizing that the military and security services are not monolithic structures. There are cracks, fissures, and disagreements within these bodies where a reasoned critique can find purchase. (Connable's *Military Review* critique of the HTS program [2009] and Brian Selmeski's 2007 paper for the Royal Military College of Canada on cultural competency demonstrate just how divergent opinions can be within the military on questions of culture and the "human terrain.") Therein lies an opportunity for those of us working in contexts in which local communities are enlisted by the US security services or their counterparts to contribute to their own security. Accounts of the Awakening movement in Iraq have made it abundantly clear that even within the military (if not in the more extreme views of hawkish, neoconservative nonmilitary analysts), there is a great deal of ambivalence about programs to militarize local communities as security contractors. "It remains to be seen," writes Eisenstadt (2007:170) in his survey of the military's use of tribal structures in Iraq, "whether the Anbar Awakening can hold together…or whether coalition efforts to work with the tribes and arm tribal militias are in fact paving the way for an even more violent civil war." The memory of Afghanistan, in which US covert efforts to arm anti-Soviet forces led to the formations that became the Taliban, looms large in the writings of many security theorists.

The current circumstances of militarization are very different from Afghanistan in the 1980s. But there is an audience within the security forces interested in the long-term consequences of outsourcing security. And social scientists are uniquely positioned to explore the broad and pressing consequences of the militarization of local communities and existing social networks. For example, militarization as a social preoccupation with war (Gusterson 2007:156) or the crafting of national narratives around military activity (Lutz 2002) are two ways to define militarization.

And they seem to be most at work in current military theory. Commanders in the US military are advised in the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* to "find a single narrative that emphasizes the inevitability and rightness of the COIN operation's success" (United States Army and Marine Corps 2007:298).

This narrative form of militarization is clearly evident in efforts to mobilize Iraqi neighborhoods to take charge of their own security in Baghdad or to guard the nation's future by forming irregular militias to secure oil pipelines. Sunni leaders in Iraq are urged to take responsibility for the nation's future by gathering together youth for security patrols, and appeals are made to both the national and masculine pride of community leaders in standing up to insurgents. What the conventional wisdom on militarization as a master narrative fails to capture is that militarizing communities in much of the world leads to a fundamental reorganization of youth, labor, violence, and social hierarchies. What we learn from the Sierra Leone example, and countless others more familiar to social scientists than to most other witnesses, is that these mobilizations are not easily demobilized. More often they become critical and often dangerous players in the mode of popular politics that governs much of the world today (Chatterjee 2004). Providing payment and logistical support to marginal young men to act as security guards or militia fighters is an act of employment (not only deployment) that cannot simply be revoked in a state with little economic opportunity for youth. In an environment in which masculinity and citizenship are tied to the exercise of violence it can be enormously difficult to simply disband armed cohorts. And when politics is governed by a logic of interest groups competing for limited resources of the state, local communities with access to the means of violence are unlikely to give them up just because foreign forces declare *their* mission accomplished. All of this was true of the CDF in Sierra Leone as it has been and will continue to be elsewhere. Anthropologists with an interest in the long view of social organization and the micropolitics of local communities can fill in a great deal of the detail as to how this happens. And they can do so in dialogue with at least some military leaders who voice unease over whether outsourcing to local surrogates will lead to "an even more violent civil war," as Eisenstadt wrote of the Awakening in Iraq.

In those situations where local militias have been mobilized under the auspices of external forces, it is imperative that social scientists participate in demobilization planning. "DDRs" (Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs) have become a subspecialty within the world of postconflict development assistance. There is a conventional wisdom as to

how to conduct DDRs, and the same formulas are replicated in case after case. In Sierra Leone, Liberia, and then in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations, with a great deal of support from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the World Bank, repeated the same failed process in each country. The only significant change in design between these three programs was an increase in the amount ex-combatants were paid for turning in weapons—a strategy that led to a massive influx of weaponry to Côte d'Ivoire by the time the DDR train reached that country. In every instance the "reintegration" component in disarmament planning has been given short shrift. International military observers on the ground in Sierra Leone in 2001 were open about the fact that from a military point of view, removing weapons from circulation was the only real priority in the DDR exercise, a fact made glaringly obvious by the poor job training and lack of follow-up for placing ex-combatants into stable postconflict environments.

What the culturalist turn in military thinking should produce is an understanding that demobilization of irregular militias is a social project more than a military project. Where reintegration worked best in Sierra Leone after the war was outside the official DDR process, when community leaders set the terms of return for ex-fighters and when those youth who did return to their home communities did so with something meaningful to contribute. From that perspective, "security" in a postconflict environment is divorced from the demobilization component of a DDR and requires an entirely different base of knowledge.

This is true when the goal is to disband militias entirely, but it is also true in contexts in which the goal is to transition informal security contractors into the formal police or military services, as is the case in much of Iraq with the Awakening movement. "Wild success," according to one US officer in Baghdad, "is these guys being integrated into honest-to-God, badge-holding cops. That would be a magnificent sign" (Tyson 2007). Yet as Sean McFate noted in 2007, there is virtually no academic or policy literature on the process of vetting personnel for security sector jobs in postconflict conditions—a glaring absence. Ascertaining who among an ex-combatant populace is of the "proper character" (S. McFate 2007:79) to transition from irregular combatant to security sector agent requires a depth of local knowledge. It requires sensitivity to the operations of power and authority and to local conceptions of legitimate and illegitimate violence. The yardsticks by which military strategists judge parties to a violent conflict may not—indeed probably are not—those most useful for establishing who should participate in a postconflict security force. Working with the US or other militaries in such a planning capacity for postconflict

programs is a far cry from the kind of cultural knowledge production envisioned by the HTS; and while it may not be ethically unambiguous, it cannot justifiably be thought of as "mercenary anthropology."

Anthropologists working on these issues are in a unique position. They can speak in a way that is both ethically responsible to the communities in which they work and does not require sacrificing the theoretical gains of the discipline to preach a dumbed-down version of culture. The knowledge that matters in these circumstances is not the bits and pieces of cultural data envisioned by the HTS and its supporters. It is a more nuanced and theoretically sophisticated understanding of process and global forces. It includes analyses of commodity chains, flows of late capital, and the legacies of colonialism. It is not ethnographic intelligence but anthropological theory that is most useful in understanding the future effects of outsourcing war.

THE NEW APPLICATION OF THEORY

As military interest in "open source" ethnographic knowledge continues to grow, it will be less and less relevant whether anthropologists choose to speak their truths directly to military or intelligence personnel. More important will be that anthropologists are not restricted in their ability to conduct research in conflict zones and that their knowledge is put into circulation. No doubt there will be opportunities for those who choose to conduct classified research under security service auspices, but that model of knowledge production will remain much less significant than the work of anthropologists as teachers and the anthropological material in academic journals and popular media that are now required reading for military culturalists. (One has only to look at the footnotes to Eisenstadt's 2007 "Iraq: Tribal Engagement Lessons Learned" to recognize that it is as well sourced in the anthropological literature as many graduate level papers.) This is not necessarily something that anthropologists should shy away from. The key intervention in the future is not a laundry list of cultural traits or ethnographic details that might jeopardize those with whom social scientists work in the field. The real contribution is a theoretical one, an understanding of how violence works as a social force, the consequences of mobilization and militarization, and what it means to employ social formations for violent ends.

Here, ironically, we may yet see the revalorization of theory, or at least the end of the pointless "applied" versus "theoretical" divide. This has been one of the undercurrents of much of the debate over HTS and the relative positioning of social scientists within the academy versus those working

directly within military institutions. Both Montgomery McFate and Anna Simons, anthropologists working directly with the armed forces, have drawn a contrast between the abstract "long winded discussions on 'capitalism' and 'colonialism'" of professional academics and the "more pressing tasks" faced by those engaged in military affairs (M. McFate 2007:20; see also M. McFate 2005a; Simons and Lutz 2002). But in an era when the Israeli Defense Force is reading the French psychoanalytic Marxist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari for strategy insights (Weizman 2006) this distinction is silly. It creates an entertaining debate but one that obscures a more important point. The vision of cultural knowledge (or ethnographic intelligence) as bits and pieces of useful data that underlies the HTS is not where military and social science really meet. The more productive—and less ethically fraught—common ground is the realm of theory. This is the terrain we should investigate by exploring what happens when existent social networks become the militarized subcontractors of war, and what we, the subcontractors of knowledge production, can do about it.

Notes

1. Robert M. Gates, US Secretary of Defense, quoted in Shankar 2008:10. See also the "About AFRICOM" section of the command's website, http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp (accessed October 9, 2008). Additional background and commentary on AFRICOM can be found in Besteman 2008, 2009; Keenan 2008, and S. McFate 2008.

2. Eisenstadt is the director of the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He was involved in the planning of Operation Iraqi Freedom and served as an advisor to the Iraq Study Group.

3. This is the approach that prevailed during the US involvement in Vietnam, for example, where it was assumed that terrorizing communities, or simply destroying them, would undermine support for the enemy. See Kipp et al. 2006:2–3.

4. The AAA's Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Committee (CEAUSSIC) report of October 14, 2009, states that as of April 2009, only six HTS employees hold PhDs in anthropology. Five more possess MAs in the discipline. These figures come directly from HTS. As the report indicates, however, the number of HTS personnel has fluctuated since 2007, and the particular specialties of HTS personnel are not always reported.

5. Indeed, the CEAUSSIC report points out that in the summer of 2009 the number of HTS contractors dropped as these positions were shifted to government jobs.

6. Colonel Wilson, according to his biography in *Military Review*, "recently completed an Army War College Fellowship in irregular warfare and counterterrorism with the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. He is currently serving as the operations director for Special Operations Command South in Homestead, Florida" (Wilson 2006:38). This makes Colonel Wilson a significant figure in both crafting and implanting US counterinsurgency philosophy.

7. This passage from Arquilla's editorial is also discussed in Hersh 2005 and critiqued in Elkins 2005.

8. The manual goes on to state: "This does not mean that they should be irregular in the sense of being brutal or outside proper control" (United States Army and Marine Corps 2007:299), though it is not clear where that line of brutality is to be drawn or what being "under proper control" means if the force is not operating "in a U.S. image."

9. Renzi (2006a:18–19), writing in *Military Review*, somewhat simplistically calls Taylor and his contacts a "blood diamond cartel" and identifies them as one of his three case studies in "dark networks," along with Al-Qaeda and drug-trafficking syndicates. More detailed histories of the war in Sierra Leone and Liberia can be found in Ellis 1999, Gberie 2005, Keen 2005, and Richards 1996.

10. There is no reliable data as to how many Kamajors there actually were. Mendes in rural areas of Sierra Leone often claim that every adult male was a Kamajor. Sam Hinga Norman, the leader of the Kamajors, put the number at 99,000, an estimate that is much too high. Some 37,000 combatants registered as Kamajors during the disarmament campaign, a number that is suspect given the way the disarmament was conducted. One of the complicating factors in arriving at an accurate census for the Kamajors is that many men mobilized only for a short time when their communities were under attack, while others became more active and mobile and fought throughout the war. Both types of combatants self-identify as Kamajors.

11. This research is detailed further in Hoffman 2004a, 2007a, 2007b.

12. And, as subsequent investigations have shown, with Al-Qaeda, for whom Charles Taylor and his allies in the RUF and the Sierra Leone Army were trading diamonds. See Farah 2004.

13. In 2006 I served as an expert witness on behalf of one of the CDF accused, Moinina Fofana. I was at the time and remain highly critical of the Special Court indictments of the CDF, primarily on the grounds that it is a mistake to think of mobilizations like the CDF as "armies" organized and regulated by military chains of command (see Hoffman 2007b). On the human rights record of the CDF and local understandings of the laws of war, see Ferme and Hoffman 2004.

14. "[I]n traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. When women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts.…Homesick troops want to drop their guard with kids. But insurgents are watching. They notice any friendships between troops and children. They may either harm the children as punishment or use them as agents" (United States Army and Marine Corps 2007:296–297).

15. This is an argument I have made in more detail in Hoffman 2003, 2004b.

16. A 2005 article in the *New Yorker* by Seymour Hersh describes the structural realignment of US security services that facilitates a great deal more "black operations" by the Pentagon without congressional oversight. Such institutional change has implications that will last beyond the end of the George W. Bush administration under which it began.

