PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TIME OF CONFLICT: A TOOL FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY

Cheryl White and Thomas Livoti

A counterinsurgent can seldom cover bad or nonexistent policy with propaganda
David Galula 1964

Introduction

The opening quote by French war theorist David Galula is particularly true for the role of cultural heritage and antiquities preservation. As a diplomatic maneuver, high-ranking military decision-makers herald antiquities preservation as an important component to conflict resolution and wartime reconciliation. However, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) lacks a strategic policy and tactical plan-of-action to protect antiquities and cultural heritage.

This chapter has two goals. The first goal is to inform archaeological and military communities about the importance of cooperation to protect and preserve cultural property in the Global War on Terrorism\(^1\) (GWOT). The second goal is to demonstrate how the principles and application of counterinsurgency (COIN) can serve as a device for antiquities protection and heritage preservation in time of conflict. We draw on examples from the U.S./NATO\(^2\) conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide the U.S. DoD with a heritage policy to be used as a force multiplier for COIN operations. A force multiplier is a capability which significantly increases a military organization’s effectiveness during combat/humanitarian operations and thus

\(^1\) An international military campaign led by the United States and its primary NATO partners, most notably the United Kingdom. The intent of the GWOT is to identify, locate, and eliminate militant organizations and terrorist belligerents, such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The term denotes a military means to meet a political, social, and ideological goal.

\(^2\) North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment (Kila 2011: 323). An understanding of the host nation’s cultural heritage combined with respectful behavior is a force multiplier for any global operation (Kila 2011: 323) and thus will not only protect cultural property, but more importantly save lives. In addition, we offer recommendations to develop a heritage policy that applies tried and tested practices to a feasible operational plan of action for phases of conflict, stabilization, and reconstruction. For the purpose of this chapter, the terms ‘cultural heritage’, ‘cultural property protection’, ‘cultural resource management’, and ‘antiquities preservation’ are used interchangeably. Collectively, they refer to a combined effort by trained professionals and stakeholders to maintain the integrity of moveable and immovable objects, such as earthworks, monuments, and buildings. These terms also refer to tangible and intangible objects, such as artifacts, artwork, books, and manuscript repositories.

The three central questions addressed in this chapter are: 1) Why should archaeologists work with the military? 2) How do we preserve cultural heritage during conflict? and 3) Where does cultural heritage fall within the spectrum of counterinsurgency, conflict, stabilization, and reconstruction operations?

Counterinsurgency and Insurgency

Insurgency and counterinsurgency are forms of warfare that are extremely complex in nature (Petraeus et al. 2007: 1). In contemporary terms, an insurgency is an “Organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict” (FM 1–02 2004: 1–101; Kilcullen 2010: 1). “Stated another way, an insurgency is an organized, protracted, politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control” (Kilcullen 2010: 1; Petraeus et al. 2007: 2). Counterinsurgency, on the other hand, consists of military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions to defeat an insurgency (FM 1–02 2004: 1–47). Unlike conventional warfare, counterinsurgency has no front lines or uniformed belligerents. Instead, the enemy blends in with the local population. The two major differences between conventional warfare and counterinsurgency are: 1) conventional warfare is an enemy-centric approach with a focus to defeat the enemy (Kilcullen 2006: 9); and 2) counterinsurgency is a population-centric approach with a focus to win over the benign and vulnerable segments of the population (Moyar 2009: 2). The lack of obvious front lines, coupled with a