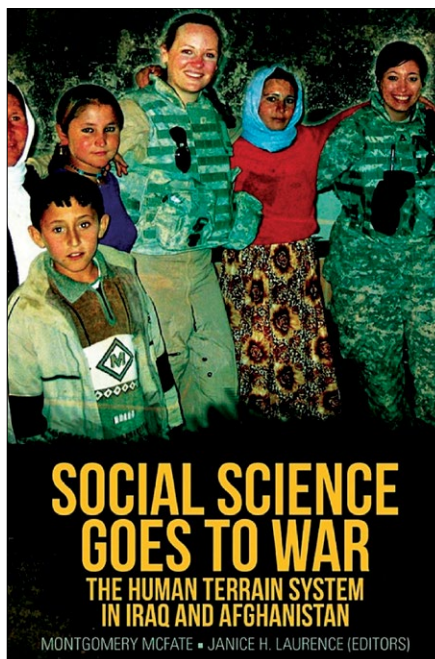


information on recent operations in Syria with substantive footnotes of the sources for the information. Other chapters include substantially less detail, often citing the lack of available information. The chapters are generally short with the shortest being only eight pages and containing no information on equipment or training.

The strength of *Elite Warriors* is the variety of authors and their use of native-language sources, often from mass media and generally current, as well as other authoritative material. The generous use of footnotes makes the book a worthwhile resource for those who want a guide to other useful material. The book, however, fails to explain its rationale for the relevance or importance of the 14 selected countries. Readers will find value in the China and Iran chapters but wonder where they might find information on key allies including Japan, South Korea, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the inconsistent format and level of detail may frustrate some readers. Readers looking for more specifics on U.S. forces should examine Linda Robinson's *Masters of Chaos* (PublicAffairs, 2009) and the more recent historical evaluation by Mark Moyers titled *Oppose Any Foe* (Ingram, 2017). Nevertheless, the material in *Elite Warriors* is valuable and the book is an ideal primer for someone without a background in special operations who wants to learn the basics about foreign military elites and have a guide to other useful sources. JFQ

Brigadier General Bruce McClintock, USAF (Ret.), is the Chief Executive Officer of Zenith Advisors Group, a full-spectrum startup and government consulting company.



Social Science Goes to War: The Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan

Edited by Montgomery McFate and
Janice H. Laurence
Oxford University Press, 2015
\$39.95 320 pp.
ISBN: 978-0190216726

Reviewed by Brian R. Price

The gap between academia and the military has existed at least since the early 1960s, when Project Camelot crystallized political opposition to the American military/security apparatus by activist academicians. As a result, the military/security community established its own think tanks, designed to replicate social and hard science capabilities, reducing the political noise and fallout inherent in the engagement with a potentially hostile academic community. On the other side of the divide, many academics reacted with anger to social scientists engaged in military activity, political beliefs fusing with concerns of academic freedom and fanned with the flames of opposition to the Vietnam War in what they saw as colonialism and rampant militarization of American society.

This gap has, arguably, reduced the military's effectiveness in operations like Iraq and Afghanistan because think tanks and professional military education have not replicated the academic depth of understanding in local cultural dynamics. Critics like author and co-editor Montgomery McFate, herself an accomplished anthropologist, attorney, and longtime professor at the Naval War College, argue this is because military culture is task-oriented, reductionist, and problem-solving by nature as opposed to the more open-ended, expansive, and puzzle-solving individual nature of academic inquiry that is necessary to produce depth of qualitative knowledge of social complexity. This becomes a problem when the military is tasked, as it has been many times since 1989, with operations other than war where understanding the complexities of the local culture can mean the difference between success and failure, reduced casualties, and escalation.

In the polarized literature surrounding the U.S. Army's controversial Human Terrain System (HTS), few publications are likely to have the impact that this volume promises on the debate surrounding the inclusion of social science expertise within the American military/security establishment. McFate introduces a concept of *the military-academic divide*, noting how the HTS was often successful in bridging the sociocultural gap between not only the Afghan/Iraqi societies and expeditionary military units but also the social scientists' own academic world and that of the military. This out-of-the-box perspective, McFate and co-editor Janice Laurence conclude, proved valuable in widening the perspective of military teams in an effort to represent the local population in the military decisionmaking process.

McFate was the anthropologist who, together with Colonel Steve Fondacaro, USA, led HTS in its formative period. McFate and Laurence gathered first-person data by social scientists who worked in Iraq and Afghanistan. They offer the best summary to date of the program's establishment and mission in "Mind the Gap." McFate's contribution

in particular is valuable given the U.S. military's retrenchment following sequestration and the myriad points around the globe where the U.S. military is likely to be again engaged, albeit at a much lower level of intensity. Laurence provides the concluding chapter, assessing HTS's successes and failures with an insightful piece, "The Human Terrain System." She and the whole group of authors assert that, in keeping with the military's own assessments, sociocultural knowledge and understanding directly contributed to operational success at the brigade level and below at the least.

Social Science Goes to War offers a number of valuable and well-written contributions that range from memoir-type lessons learned pieces, such as Ted Callahan's "An Anthropologist at War in Afghanistan," Katherine Blue Carroll's "What Do You Bring to the Fight?" and Jennifer Clark's "Playing Spades in Al Anbar." Other pieces are more analytical, offering advice on integration of civilians in military units, including Katherine Reedy's "The Four Pillars of Integration," James Dorough-Lewis's "Investing in Uncertainty," and Leslie Adrienne Payne's "Allied Civilian Enablers and the Helmand Surge." The ethical dimension that has been heavily criticized is ably addressed, though likely without a resonating conclusion, in a useful debate piece in Carolyn Fleuhr-Lobban and George Lucas's, "Assessing the Human Terrain Teams," and in Brian Brereton's "Tangi Valley."

Each of these contributors presents thoughtful, well-heeled commentary that speaks volumes of the program's potential for injecting insight and understanding into stability operations or a counterinsurgency campaign. They also highlight the difficulties: political division at home, ideology, physical danger, lack of consistent access to local persons, administrative complexity, and most of all, cultural gaps between the military and civilian academics working with the mission-oriented military units.

While HTS was closed in September of 2014, the need for sociocultural knowledge in the military/security establishment has not ebbed. If anything,

it continues with limited knowledge of potential areas for American military intervention, with humanitarian missions and more limited engagements, even if the United States remains weary of nation-building or large-scale interventions. This book captures the perspectives from within the program, noting successes and responding to critics. While it will not silence challenges from academia or from segments of the military (where criticism of HTS was part of the larger counterinsurgency-versus-conventional operations debate), this volume stands to become a key source in future evaluations of the HTS program, representing both a primary source and analysis that reflects well on the skills of the HTS social scientists who staked their lives and their careers in order to serve downrange.

Countering politically charged commentary against the program, McFate, Laurence, and their contributors offer a balanced perspective between that of the military/security establishment and the academic community. Military critics tended to oppose the program as part of the larger counterinsurgency/major combat operations debate. This is an old debate within the military, one that this volume will hardly dent, but there is a growing consensus that, regardless of whether the military's focus should be on major combat operations or operations other than war, sociocultural knowledge will be of great importance.

To this reviewer, having served as a social scientist within the HTS program in 2011–2012, *Social Science Goes to War* is the most balanced and thorough representation of the program yet produced from the perspective of those who actually did the work, but there are, however, a few weaknesses. Most of those writing served during 2008–2009, but the positions of those who served later—from late 2010 to 2013—are not well represented. This phase represents a new period during which HTS was directly managed by an Army officer, changing the program's tone, policies, and direction. Nor does it include the several critics who served within the program. To be sure, the book achieves its intended purpose, showcasing the program's successes and potential,

addressing the administrative and team dynamic/recruiting challenges, and discussing the critical debate that swirled around the program. But this debate hardly touched those riding in the hot, cramped vehicles, risking dismemberment by improvised explosive devices or bullet wounds, and living day to day with the mission of trying to bring understanding to the military's decisionmaking process. *Social Science Goes to War* does a masterful job of representing their perspective and will become a critical piece of literature in the ongoing debate on the use of social science in the conduct of military operations. JFQ

Dr. Brian R. Price is an Associate Professor of History in the Department of History and International Studies at Hawaii Pacific University.