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Simons, Anna

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Pamela R. Frese and Margaret C. Harrell

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CHAPTER 6

The Military Advisor as Warrior-King and Other "Going Native" Temptations

Anna Simons

Although anthropologists and military advisors may seem to make for strange bedfellows, they actually have more in common than meets the eye. Both spend long periods of time in the field, living with locals. Both must figure out how to establish rapport. And both are confronted by similar kinds of cross-cultural communication challenges, as well as by a host of temptations. Among the most common but also insidious of these is that of "going native," though for advisors "going native" has yet to be well defined. Clarification of this term is one goal of this chapter. A second is to point out that from the locals' perspective, of course, no advisor or anthropologist would ever be mistaken for a native. Instead, "going native" is purely a nonnative's fear—or fantasy—and can pose problems for anyone relying on an anthropologist or advisor's work. This is because members of both professions are forced to straddle two slippery slopes. On one hand, empathy can all too easily lead to sympathy, in which case any semblance of distance or objectivity is lost. On the other, being treated as a "bwana" or warrior-king can prove irresistibly seductive, and may wind up warping one's sense of mission.

We see this most starkly in the case of military advisors, though, as I will suggest, anthropologists can also suffer from a parallel form of mission creep. Thrust into what, by definition, has to be considered an ill-defined role,

advisors are always in an ambiguous position. At the same time, they are never entirely powerless. Their relationship with whomever they are being tasked to advise is predicated on asymmetry; otherwise they would not be accepted as advisors in the first place. This dualism—between ambiguity and power—does not generate exactly the same dilemmas from case to case, let alone when we compare anthropologists to advisors. Advisors, for instance, almost always have more economic clout than any anthropologist can bring to bear. At the same time, they remain tethered to headquarters, no matter how removed this might be or autonomous they might feel. They must continually weigh the effects they are having. They must strive to achieve headquarters' strategic goals at the local level—a level completely removed from any most of those at headquarters are familiar with. At the same time, they must ensure that the changes they introduce are not so radical that those they are advising can not sustain them on their own. To balance such objectives does not just require, but depends on, an intimacy easily achieved by eating local food, sleeping locally, and living more like locals than like headquarters staff. But from the perspective of those not in the field, this as much as anything else often makes it seem that those *in* the field *have* "gone native."

In order to better understand what "going native" means we must first better appreciate what military advisors typically find themselves tasked and then able (or unable) to do. In what follows, I compare a series of advisory experiences to illustrate the range of constraints and opportunities that confront advisors. I conclude that whenever advisors are able to take the lead both politically *and* militarily, their position *can* go to their heads—and that this is what leads to real "going native" problems.

Advising—an Overview

Military advisors are as old as professional militaries, and though no one has studied them as a force unto themselves, they must be considered to be as integral to the development of organized warfare as any other instrument. The ancient Greeks used them, Prussia generated them, the Ottomans hired them, Chinese warlords competed with one another for their services, and today we have an entire organization in the U.S. military—the U.S. Army Special Forces—that specializes in training foreign forces. Whether explicitly, implicitly, intentionally, or unintentionally, advisors have acted as agents of change. Given such a historic role, it only stands to reason that there are distinct differences in what advising has involved over time, though not all of these differences relate to technological and organizational advances, which

are most often considered the hallmarks of military progress. More significant changes have occurred thanks to shifts in social attitude. For instance, advice these days tends to take two forms: technical advice that might be offered to anyone purchasing a new weapons system, to include, for example, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies; and training offered to forces markedly less sophisticated than those doing the advising. To a certain extent, advice always has consisted of technical assistance and hands-on, direct training. But the inherent inequality between those advising and those being advised takes on a different meaning depending on whether we are talking about noncolonial, colonial, post-, or anticolonial relations.

Colonialism is pivotal because it has long influenced attitudes toward "natives", and because countries were either colonizers or colonized; only a rare few escaped the experience altogether. Just beneath, and always influencing, the colonial divide, meanwhile, has been the color bar. Today, both institutions have officially disappeared. However, their legacy still influences people's behavior and still can predetermine attitudes.

For example, if we consider the kind of advising done during the American Revolutionary War, when French, Polish, and other experienced officers served as observers, liaisons, and leaders, we find that these individuals volunteered their services because they believed in the American cause (Zamoyski 1999). They were not mercenaries, since they never switched national allegiances, continued to wear their own uniforms, and did not serve for foreign (e.g., American) pay. Also, though they may have regarded Americans as rubes, they clearly felt that, with improvement, Americans could become their equals. This was clearly not the attitude, however, of those British, French, German, and other officers sent to train troops in their respective colonies. More often than not advisors in this situation were placed in command. They could order, compel, coerce, and corporally punish. At the same time, over time, it was their duty to shape, guide, and—as independence approached—mentor those under their control. Technically speaking, no one in command should be considered an advisor. However, individuals in positions of imperial authority helped shape a legacy that has persisted long past independence, and continues to define expectations on both sides of the advisor-advisee relationship. Put most bluntly, this legacy is the conviction that locals are not to be regarded as equals. Often this idea is drilled into individuals without their even being aware. Just consider: For anyone schooled in imperial history (as all military officers still are), the leap from "They were inferior, we beat them" to "They're still inferior, but they are our equals" may be cognitively impossible. Locals, meanwhile, may inadvertently reinforce such biases whenever they continue to model their

military, and its tactics, techniques, and procedures, on those of their former colonial masters.

Of course, emulation at the local level also can be quite conscious and instrumental. Where the state is particularly dysfunctional and the local military extortionate and/or corrupt, locals may have good reasons for wanting advisors to act and be superior. "The indigs"—it should be pointed out—are seldom gulls. They certainly are not beyond using advisors for their own political ends. Even so, a distinction must be drawn between those who seek gain from advisors whom they consider to be more than just their equals and those who regard advisors as a necessary evil. The latter, for instance, typified the Partisan attitude toward American advisors during World War II, not because there had been a prior colonial relationship between Americans and Yugoslavs, but because Marshall Tito's forces were already under communist control and in Stalin's camp (Lindsay 1993; Maclean 1950). The Partisans were happy to elicit weapons, supplies, and air support from the Allies, but were not the least bit interested in receiving training or organizational advice. The argument could be made that they were already sufficiently well trained and organized, and more adept at fighting than most of those who parachuted in to assist them. Still, a concerted enough effort was made to constrain American and British operatives that, by the end of the war, some advisors actually began to fear for their lives.

A second distinction must be drawn between skepticism or hostility directed at advisors by everyone—"who are we to need advice from *them*?"—and more individualized, personal reactions. Americans who formed guerrilla groups in Luzon (in the Philippines) during World War II experienced everything from adulation to enmity in their efforts to coordinate between the groups they led and those commanded by Filipinos (Hunt and Norling 1986; Lapham and Norling 1996; Ramsey 1990). Some of the hostility directed their way was clearly communist inspired, and some was nationalist in origin, while bandits obviously had little use for American notions of law and order. But also, in Vietnam, American advisors were unable to win over all villagers. Numerous South Vietnamese opposed any foreign presence, and pockets of recalcitrant locals made it impossible ever to fully pacify the countryside. More recently, Saudi Arabians have demonstrated considerable ambivalence toward the presence of American military personnel on Saudi soil. While some have long welcomed American training, and others barely tolerate it, still others have reacted with considerable violence, as we saw with the bombing of the Khobar Towers.

If one way to determine what influences attitudes is to ask whether we are talking about cross-cultural relations among could-be-equals, cannot-be-equals, or not-even-friends, another is to examine the dependencies inherent in who is helping whom with what. By doing so we also discover just how difficult it is to distinguish between constraints inherent in the physical operating environment and those that are more social or inter-personal in origin.

Constraints (and Opportunities): Franklin Lindsay and Ben Malcom

Security has to be considered the number one priority of advisors, whether in peacetime or during war. In a hostile environment security is clearly the paramount concern, though what comprises security depends on where exactly advisors and advisees are located. If they are behind enemy lines in an uninhabited area, their safety is largely up to them and depends on their field craft (how well hidden they can stay), military skills (how much firepower they can bring to bear), and supply situation (how long they can last without resupply). The situation is complicated if there are civilians nearby, and it becomes trickier still if the advisor(s)/advisees must rely on locals for food, transportation, intelligence, and other essentials. Then they have a vulnerability over which they can exert little, if any, control, and maintaining local rapport becomes critical. However, more is required than just acting friendly. To ensure that their existence and/or location is not exposed, advisors and their advisees must offer locals something that the locals otherwise cannot provide for themselves. Ironically enough, this is usually security—in the form of law and order and protecting communities from bandits and bullies.

The advisor–advisee local relationship is paradoxical in a number of ways and reveals a series of interlocking dependencies. Initially, advisors are always most dependent. Over time, if they are good, they can turn this situation around. For example, if advisors—particularly single advisors—get sick or are injured, their lives directly depend on advisees and/or locals nursing them back to health. Yet advisors themselves are regarded as sources of (Western) medical knowledge and often bring with them or can acquire medications and first aid treatments that are locally unknown or unavailable. This also can be true for food, especially when advisors can call for resupply by air. Then they can ask for large quantities of staples, such as rice, to augment local food supplies (Hilsman 1990; Peers and Brelis 1963). Although advisors have little choice but to rely on whatever the locals use for shelter or warmth, they provide access to goods that locals may think they need more: guns, ammunition, radios, and so on. Communications is another realm in which advisors are caught both being dependent—sometimes messages can

be passed only via the local net—and in command—with their radios they instantaneously plug themselves, their advisees, and the locals into a wider world.

By now it should be clear: The advisory relationship is just like any other exchange relationship. Members on each side must feel they are mutually benefiting for the relationship to last, though the advisor is always more beholden first. Also, because the arrangements for an advisor to be present are made at higher command levels, the relationship can stay lopsided in the field, where the advisor is sent whether the locals are receptive or not. The most effective advisors invariably intuit how to turn constraints into opportunities. In some situations this is easier than in others, especially when we consider that advisors whose mission it is to help *establish* an armed force from scratch face a very different set of challenges from those who are joining a unit or force that is already up and running. This situation was made more than apparent during World War II. In the Asian theater, for instance, advisors were often responsible for recruiting and training guerrilla forces (in Burma, the Philippines, even China). They designed and helped lead these forces, acting as teachers, trainers, coordinators, liaisons, and conduits. In contrast, advisors in Europe tended to be sent in as liaisons, but more often functioned simply as conduits and were primarily (and sometimes only) valued for what they could bring in via air drops.

Even this constrained role could be used for leverage, but only if the advisor on the ground was willing to take certain risks. Here it is instructive to consider the experiences of Franklin Lindsay, who was parachuted into Slovenia in 1944 to help destroy a series of rail links (Lindsay 1993). The Partisans didn't have the supplies, or the exact know-how, to do this on their own; however, Marshall Tito also turned out to be much less interested in slowing a Nazi withdrawal through Slovenia than he was in extracting arms, explosives, and other material out of the deal in order to fight rival Yugoslav forces. In the end, even Lindsay admits he did more for the Partisans than they did for the Allied cause. Given the set-up of the relationship, this probably could not be helped, but Lindsay never fully used the leverage he had to stall (or stop) air drops. Instead, he worried that if he tried to compel the Partisans too often they would have him removed; thus he routinely stopped himself short. Compounding his problems was the fact that he never became proficient in Slovenian. At most, he could sense that he was being manipulated; the Partisans definitely kept him on a tight leash. But had he possessed better passive listening skills, he might have understood sooner and more completely the ways in which he and his fellow advisors were being used, and could have made the case more forcefully to his superiors that the Partisans were not to be trusted and that perhaps their rivals, the Chetniks, should not have been so quickly dismissed.

Advisors are always used. They tend to do much better when they understand this at the outset and then employ *how* they are being used to their advantage. Without question, the more culturally and politically attuned individuals are going in to a situation, the easier it is for them to react appropriately. But sometimes, too, this is simply a matter of being able to read other people, regardless of regional expertise. Take, for instance, Ben Malcom (1996). As a young infantry lieutenant with no previous experience in Asia (or unconventional warfare), he was faced with a classic advisory dilemma within weeks of reaching the field. In this case, the "field" was a small island off the coast of North Korea in 1952. There Malcom was assigned to help train a partisan unit whose previous Korean commander had been assassinated. Malcom's American superiors were not sure whether they could trust Mr. Pak, the unit's new commander. Mr. Pak, meanwhile, asked Malcom to accompany him on a brief visit to his safe area on the North Korean mainland, someplace both men knew Malcom was not supposed to visit. Was this a set-up? To earn Mr. Pak's trust, Malcom had little choice but to proceed; he realized, in the moment during which he was forced to decide whether to trust Mr. Pak, that he really could not refuse if he hoped to succeed as an advisor. Indeed, a whole series of interlocking dependencies manifested themselves. For instance, although it was Mr. Pak's trustworthiness that concerned the Americans, Mr. Pak needed to measure Malcom's worth because it was really up to Malcom to determine how Mr. Pak would be perceived. And, in fact, once they returned from this trip, with a bond established, Malcom's self-appointed next task *was* to convince his superiors of Mr. Pak's credibility. He did this by suggesting and then having Mr. Pak help plan and execute a daring raid. Of course, the fact that the raid called for naval and air support that only Malcom could coordinate for the Partisans certainly did not hurt his standing in their eyes. In fact, everyone benefited from this particular military action, and it took place early enough in Malcom's tour that he was able to capitalize on it, and its effects, immediately.

Malcom, then, made the most of his situation. Lindsay did not. At first glance this might seem surprising, since, on paper, one might think Malcom was no better, and in some regards was less, qualified than Lindsay to be an advisor: He was not Ivy League-educated, spoke no foreign languages, felt no particular affinity for North Koreans, and did not seek the assignment. Yet he quickly did a superlative job; he cared—how much he cared we will see shortly. As for why Lindsay did not care as much, we have to consider the

fact that Lindsay was fighting *alongside* and Malcom was fighting *against* communists. Thus Lindsay was working with people whose ultimate goals were not the same as his, whereas Malcom and the North Korean Partisans were fighting together for Koreans' freedom. This fact as much as anything may have helped set the parameters for what Malcom felt he *could* and Lindsay felt he *couldn't* do. Other factors to take into account were that Malcom lived with his Partisans on an island and felt relatively secure. He was less consistently dependent on them than Lindsay was on his Partisans, who were forced (along with Lindsay) to stay on the move. Still, while differences in the setting, location, and even timing of events clearly shaped each man's approach—as did differences in their personalities—the ultimate constraint appears to have been their reception: What the Partisans were willing to accept from Lindsay was far more limited than what the North Koreans were willing to accept from Malcom. Lindsay could offer no advice. Malcom could offer military advice, and eagerly did so at the operational, tactical, and strategic levels.

As for going native, neither man did, though perhaps it is better to draw the distinction between these two this way: Lindsay was not the least bit tempted, and Malcom had no need. The North Koreans accepted him just as he was. They themselves comprised a relatively isolated military unit, with no nearby villagers to have to worry about and thus no local politics to ensnare them—or, consequently, him.

Opportunities (and Constraints): T. E. Lawrence, Edward Lansdale, and John Paul Vann

Not so T. E. Lawrence (Asher 1998; Lawrence 1963 [1926]; Mack 1998 [1976]) or Edward Lansdale (Curry 1998; Lansdale 1991), who became behind-the-scenes politicians bar none. In one respect, the experiences of these two archetypal advisors were exactly like those of Lindsay and Malcom. In none of these cases did any of these men receive specific guidance. Here, for instance, were Lindsay's orders: "Major Lindsay is appointed Commanding Officer of the Allied Military Mission to the Partisan forces in the Stajerska area. As such, he is fully empowered to represent the Allied Military Authorities in this area. He or his delegate is the sole representative of Brigadier Maclean and through him of the Allied Commanders-in-Chief, on all matters which involve liaison with Partisan Military Authorities in the Stajerska, including military plans and supplies" (Lindsey 1993:29).

Compare this with how Lieutenant Colonel Edward Lansdale describes the mission statement he received: "My orders were plain. The United States

government wanted me to give all help feasible to the Philippine government in stopping the attempt by the Communist-led Huks to overthrow that government by force. My help was to consist mainly of advice where needed and desired. It was up to me to figure out how best to do this" (Lansdale 1991:2).

The most significant difference between Lansdale and Lawrence on one hand and Lindsay and Malcom on the other is the levels at which they operated. Lansdale and Lawrence offered political and not just military advice. And both did so at operational, tactical, *and* strategic levels. Both men also became kingmakers. This is not what either was specifically told to do, but it is what each man was positioned to be able to do, and each capitalized on the opportunity in his own way. No one, for instance, told Lawrence that he should turn Faisal into the leader of the Arab revolt. Similarly, it was Lansdale who helped decide that the United States should back Ramon Magsaysay. While Lawrence clearly saw something pliable in Faisal, Lansdale concentrated on what was most promising in Magsaysay—namely that here was someone already committed to reforming both the Filipino military and government. Lansdale suggested various ways in which Magsaysay, as minister of defense, could use the military to bolster, protect, and extend democracy, which would in turn convince Filipinos that the army was *their* army and on their side. He did this through a series of nonstop conversations with Magsaysay during which he also consciously fed the man's personal ambitions.

In some regards, Lawrence's task was much more straightforward than Lansdale's, since Faisal (his chief advisee) was already well known and well respected before Lawrence ever arrived on the scene. Faisal, as a sharif, was a member of the "ruling" family of Mecca, and he, his father, and his brothers had long contemplated Arab independence from the Ottomans. What Lawrence had to help him do was unite the various Bedouin tribes outside his immediate circle of followers and then keep widening this circle of support to break the Ottoman hold on Arabia. Even more important, Lawrence had to keep money and materiel pouring into Faisal's coffers, which meant retaining British support for what many in England considered to be only a sideshow. With World War I being fought in the trenches in Europe—and with one failed sideshow in Gallipoli already—Lawrence had to make more of both Faisal and the Arab revolt than either perhaps merited. At the same time, to do what he wanted without too much oversight or interference required him to keep certain of his intentions secret and to willfully ignore or avoid receiving messages from his superiors that ran counter to his plans. In this sense, Lawrence clearly put his intentions ahead of his government's intent and can be said to have strayed "off the reservation" at least some of the time. Does this mean he went native? Many would argue yes.

Yet what then of Lansdale? Lansdale was always accused of the opposite, of being "the quiet American" who was able to do his government's secret bidding.

On the face of it, and given their operating environments, Lawrence's and Lansdale's styles could not have been more different. Lawrence dressed like a Bedouin, lived like a Bedouin, rode camels like a Bedouin, and operated in Arabic. Lansdale never dressed or lived like a Filipino. Yet, on closer examination, many of their methods for how they advised were eerily similar. For one, Lawrence shadowed Faisal as much as possible, just as Lansdale did Magsaysay. This enabled each of them to prime their respective advisees and interject ideas and shape projects that both leaders could then present (and self-present) as their own. The intimacy with which Lawrence and Lansdale made sure they operated offers a sharp and ultimately telling contrast to the methods employed by John Paul Vann, arguably the most famous American advisor in Vietnam, and someone who was aware of both Lawrence and Lansdale (Sheehan 1988). Like Lawrence and Lansdale, Vann also set himself up to be a kingmaker, but unlike them, Vann failed.[1]

Lieutenant Colonel John Paul Vann's advisory assignment was to put together a coordinated war effort in the northern part of the Mekong Delta. The counterpart he was given was Colonel Huynh Van Cao. With no choice but to work with or through Cao, Vann was constrained from the outset. At the same time, though, Vann did not do what Lawrence and Lansdale did. They steeped themselves in local politics to better understand their situation. Vann assessed his situation strictly militarily. He was a gifted tactician and strategist who understood exactly why American and South Vietnamese forces were so ineffective at the operational and tactical levels, and—militarily—knew exactly how to fix the problem. One thing he was convinced he had to do was get Cao to fight. Indeed, his self-proclaimed goal was to turn Cao into "the Tiger of South Vietnam" (Sheehan 1988:75). Unfortunately, in his desperation to bring out the fighter in Cao, Vann ignored Cao the politician and remained blind to the political constraints that prevented Cao from doing what Vann wanted. In Cao's own calculus, he could afford to become just enough of a hero to garner favor with President Ngo Dinh Diem, but he should never be too successful for fear that Diem would then view him as a rival and a threat. Unlike Lawrence or Lansdale, who tried to view things through the natives' eyes, Vann never attempted to assess Cao's situation as Cao might. Worse, in giving public credit to Cao for operations he (Vann) planned, Vann made it impossible to later claim, even to his own chain of command, that Cao was not as effective as advertised. Vann basically boxed himself in.

More tragically still, despite Vann's inability to appreciate why corruption was so rampant in South Vietnam, or why members of the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) would not fight harder, he clearly understood that the United States would lose if it did not change its strategy and tactics. He tried to make this clear to his superiors, as well as to policymakers in the Department of Defense, but for a host of reasons never managed to get through. This, then, makes for another striking contrast with Lansdale and Lawrence, who both succeeded as advisors in no small measure because they excelled at convincing their superiors to listen to them. Not only can Lawrence and Lansdale be said to have operated politically *and* militarily in Arabia and the Philippines, but they were consummate strategists in London and Washington as well. Both were well connected at the highest levels. More to the point still, both were considered to be *the* authorities on cross-cultural relations in the region of the world in which they were operating. Lawrence, it should be noted, also perfected the art of *appearing* the expert. Lansdale was the former advertising executive, but Lawrence is the one who made sure he looked as if he had gone native, which he did in part to advertise how well he knew "his" natives; there was no other reason to appear at headquarters, for instance, in Bedouin garb.

Had Vann tried to pull something like that off, it, too, would have backfired. Not only did Vietnam require a different kind of irregular warfare to be fought in the halls of power than that called for by the Arab revolt or the Huk rebellion, but Vann was too high-ranking in too prominent a position. At the same time, he was not singular enough; there were numerous other advisors of his rank, tasked with similar assignments. Lawrence and Lansdale were ones of a kind. Ironically, in Vietnam the more junior or remotely located advisors tended to better fit at least this half of the Lawrence-Lansdale mold. No matter how forsaken they may have felt by their own chain of command, and no matter how little political clout they had with their superiors, it was lieutenants, captains, and noncommissioned officers who were perfectly positioned to develop empathy. Also, they were the individuals who had locals there to remind them on a daily basis just how important they were in *their* scheme of things. Americans who took advantage of this wound up doing exactly what Lansdale would have had all Americans do to win a people's war: They engaged *with* the people, at the grassroots. Here, though, in the worst of the hardship postings, is also where the temptations to go native invariably proved most seductive.

Going Native (or Not) in Two Acts: David Donovan and Alan Cornett

Not only did being and feeling isolated afford advisors all sorts of leeway in terms of dress, comportment, and attitude in Vietnam, but isolation also

presented them with choices. At one end of the range of possibilities, they could hunker down and wait out their tours, making little local impact. Alternatively, they could attempt to raise the standard of living for as many people as possible within their area of operation. For those who took the latter approach, nights were often spent setting up raids and ambushes designed to flush out the Vietcong, while days were devoted to improving local sanitation, running clinics, setting up (and supplying) local schools, and training and inspiring locals to want to take over these and other jobs (cf. Hickey 1965; West 1972).

A general rule seemed to be: The more effective the team, the more the locals asked of it, while there was no good way to be effective without becoming enmeshed in local politics. Here is how First Lieutenant David Donovan describes his situation in 1968:

> I was a twenty-three-year-old idealistic young army officer, left essentially alone to fight my own little war with my own little team of companions. I was determined and eager to do my best. Given free rein by a do-nothing but compliant district chief, I began to accept a growing list of duties and responsibilities. Military operations were performed as I directed; people were imprisoned or freed at my word; food and clothing from various agencies were distributed where I said, when I said; aircraft bombed or strafed at my command; curfews were established according to my wishes; villagers applied to or through me for medical help, school, supplies, building materials, and agricultural development assistance. I could even cause the summary execution of practically anyone in my district. In many ways I controlled life and death of thousands of the people.
>
> The Vietnamese recognized the power I wielded, and after a while I began to expect the almost fawning courtesy with which I was treated. With no one around to give me my true measure, I began to accept my elevated status, and I began to use the powers in my hands as if they were mine by right.
>
> Most of the responsibilities were not truly mine, but I knew the district chief would approve anything I did, and if I didn't do it, I had the definite impression that very little would get done. Perhaps it was only youthful American arrogance that made me take these powers that were outside my rightful reach, perhaps it was the almost mystical idealism with which I took on my whole task, but when I had the chance to get something done I by-God took it! Perhaps I was just a high-toned American, but in my dreams I was a cavalier for freedom, I was a warrior for Camelot. Even more than that. I was a Warrior King. (Donovan 1985:127)

Donovan is worth quoting at such length for two reasons: He understood the power inherent in his position and the predicament in which this placed him. Also, he exemplifies what someone is capable of when he can offer political and military advice at the operational, tactical, and strategic levels: He leads, he no longer just advises. This is substantively different from the positions Lansdale and Lawrence occupied as kingmakers. As much as they, too, collapsed together political and military advice and offered operational, tactical, and strategic assistance, they never took charge. Also, no matter how "native" Lawrence may have looked to his fellow Brits, we must remember that no one in Arabia mistook him for someone in authority. It is arguable whether any Arabs even viewed him as *an* authority, let alone a subject matter expert on what he has since been credited with codifying: guerrilla warfare. Yet there is no question that Donovan, who clearly was not any more knowledgeable about the local situation than any of the Vietnamese he worked with, *was* in command. What helped elevate him was the fact that he not only thought in terms of the good of the community but acted accordingly. Meanwhile, the more he was able to do, the more in charge people wanted him to be. He managed this, as far as we know, without abusing his power. He also did it having adopted the dress, diet, and mannerisms of the local villagers. He was even initiated into the Hoa Hao religious sect. Outwardly he must have appeared deeply sympathetic. But does this mean he went native?

The answer has to be no on two counts. First, though Donovan's attitudes were clearly colored by his team's isolation and the fact that he was far more comfortable living like a Vietnamese than an American, he never once deviated from prosecuting the war exactly as he was supposed to fight it, in terms of denying the area to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong sympathizers. It helped that, in being ignored, he found himself with tremendous leeway. But nothing that he did ran counter to larger war aims. In this sense, no contradictions arose between his commitment to the local community and his loyalty to the United States—and "his" villagers' cause *could* become his own. Unlike Lawrence, Donovan never had to gamble that what he was doing *for* the Vietnamese might work, even though it flew in the face of his own government's aims. The argument also can be made, of course, that by taking on the role of warrior-king, Donovan really was not acting very Vietnamese.[2] Instead, by accepting (or carving out) this position, he retained just enough distance from his "subjects" that there could be no mistaking him for one of them.

Oddly enough, it is this status differential that brings us closest to the real crux of the "going native" problem. In none of the advisory literature is there

ever a hint that an advisor might have wanted to be mistaken *for* a native. Instead, advisors always want to be treated as at least slightly better than the natives—or, at the very least, as a first among equals. Whether this is what they go into advising expecting and thus work toward, or this is how they are received and then is what they come to expect, depends on the historical context (e.g., is the relationship noncolonial, postcolonial, etc.). But also, as alluded to earlier, paternalism may simply be inherent in any relationship in which advisors are assigned to train forces that are not well outfitted, lack basic infantry skills, and live in harsh conditions. Rudimentary settings themselves may make it far easier for advisors to want to lead and not just guide or assist. At the same time, on multiple levels, this is likely to not only reinforce but reward their sense of their own superiority. If this idea is not then tempered by respect for local ways of doing things—and this is an extremely difficult balance to maintain over time, as Donovan poignantly admits—such individuals may well wind up acting too imperial, or, worse, they may begin to try to out-primitive the primitives. Of course, the real horror is when they appear to do both, as Francis Ford Coppola would have us believe Kurtz does in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Yet even in *Apocalypse Now* (never mind Conrad's novel), we must remember Kurtz's power over the natives rests in his *not* being a native. At most, what we can say is that Kurtz takes to the situation as if *it*—the situation—were natural; it appeals to his most elemental (or primitive) self. What we then mistake for his having gone native *with* the natives is really his going native in the moment. Clearly, both book and movie represent fictionalized accounts of what it means to go native, and Coppola's character is the only one of the two who can be considered to have been an advisor. Nevertheless, this preference for living large in a liminal situation—namely war—does seduce advisors. We see this most clearly if we compare Sergeant Alan Cornett's account of his experiences in Vietnam with Donovan's now-classic memoir (Cornett 2000).

Like Donovan, Cornett served on a MAT (mobile advisory) team in 1968, though one immediate difference between the two is that Donovan served a single tour. By choice, Cornett spent seven years "in-country." Ergo the title of his book, *Gone Native*. At several points in his memoir he describes feeling more comfortable in Vietnam than in the United States. Not only was it "the only world that would accept me for who I was" (p. 175), but "even today I don't feel the same level of security and comfort I had there" (p. 204). Cornett describes himself as having "gone so native that I would shun fellow Americans because they didn't understand my relationship with the people. I didn't like the way many Americans treated the Vietnamese, as if they were a second-class people in their own land" (p. 249). From this excerpt it might sound as if Cornett was fully committed to helping the Vietnamese in the same manner as Donovan. He certainly could have; he was trained and previously worked as a Special Forces medic. But by the time he feels most at ease he is working for the Phoenix Program, whose sole purpose was to neutralize members of the Vietcong infrastructure.

Cornett's account is revealing on two counts. Like Lawrence, Lansdale, Malcom, and Donovan, he gets caught up in the moment. But unlike them, he is less absorbed by what he is doing *for* people (e.g., the people of South Vietnam) than by what he can do *to* the Vietcong. He also does not seem to want this moment to end. Over time, it is clear, war becomes his preferred environment; its elemental rules make sense, even if the politics do not. In fact, by the end, it would appear to be less Vietnam that he finds so comfortable as his status in the war zone, where he serves with an elite unit and is one of only a handful of Americans to routinely accompany a hard core group of Vietnamese. His fellow combatants are the people who matter most to him. Something else that emerges is that his loyalties do not shift so much as they clarify over time. He cares about himself first. Second come friends from whichever unit he is serving with, and then, once he marries the sister of one of these friends, comes his wife. Although she, as well as his brother-in-law, are both Vietnamese, this still does not change his fundamental orientation. His connections to them pull him deeper into their circle. They also contribute to how conflicted he sometimes feels. But his response is more personalized than it is dogmatic: He feels bad, he gets angry, he lashes out. From time to time he even questions policy. But he never seeks to make it for himself in the field. Unlike Donovan (or Vann), he does not strive to change the local situation. Instead, he finds a niche and revels in it. In a strange sort of way, this makes Cornett no less effective than Donovan, but for a very different kind of mission. What it also means, though, is that Cornett no more goes native in the way he imagines he did than did anyone else.

Staying True

What defines going native? For observers, the most obvious warning signs lie in appearance. Most militaries are predicated on a tight linkage between appearance and attitude, or rectitude and comportment—thus, the significance of looks as an indicator. However, the problem in advisory situations is that looks can easily deceive. In fact, this is exactly what they are often meant to do. For instance, Lawrence was quite forthright that no Bedouin would mistake him for one of them; his aim in dressing like one was largely

to fool anyone who might identify him as a Brit from a distance. By obscuring his identity this way he was actually following in a long line of Englishmen who attempted to pass through hostile regions dressed as natives, but always as natives from somewhere else. Richard Burton, the first European to live to write about his penetration of Mecca, accomplished this by pretending to be a merchant from a region completely removed from any he was traveling through (cf. Lovell 1998). Likewise, British agents sent to secretly map Central Asia often posed as locally credible itinerants (cf. Meyer and Brysac 1999). Of course, there were always other reasons, beyond not wanting to stand out, for agents and advisors to don native dress, comfort chief among them. Regardless, changing one's looks in the field has almost always been done for instrumental reasons. It is *persisting* in those appearances outside of a field situation that should set off alarms. Then a modified, unkempt, or absent uniform represents the surest sign that all is not as it once was. An advisor may be defying military convention just to make the point that he is different from those in the rear or at headquarters. He could be signaling that he is the expert (as Lawrence seemed to) or that his work is dirtier, harder, and more important than theirs. This was certainly advisors' attitude in Vietnam, where individuals regularly took pride in looking as if they had just come in from "the bush."

Without question, there is always a certain mystique that someone who has spent time in a hardship posting can wrap around himself. Having endured hardships with teammates and locals makes for emotional bonds that those who have been in such positions feel no one who has not can understand.[3] The fact, too, that advisors like Donovan and Malcom were living much the same life as those they were advising clearly led them to align themselves with their advisees. One could make the case that an advisor cannot be effective unless he can see the world as those he is advising see it. Certainly Lawrence's and Lansdale's abilities to do so contributed to their success, while Lindsay's and Vann's failures to do so led to innumerable problems. Having said this, though, empathy is not—or should it be allowed to become—sympathy; just because it helps when advisors understand what others feel does not mean they would do even better by *feeling* what their advisees feel. Empathy is difficult enough. Advisors often realize that their country's long-term interests are not necessarily the same as those of the country they are in. If they care enough about the people they have been tasked to advise, they may think, though, that not only do they know better than their superiors, but they must do better, too. This is what should most worry any chain of command, especially since an advisor's loyalties will remain invisible *unless* he wears them on his sleeve.

As far as advisors' commanders are concerned, their value lies in their ability to liaise, coordinate, and gather intelligence. Ideally, advisors' efforts with indigenous forces should dovetail, support, and augment the main effort, which—at least in wartime—generally involves harassing, tying down and diverting, and denying support to the enemy. At a minimum, we can say that those responsible for sending advisors, and the commanders of indigenous forces who agree to accept them, share the same foe. Ideally, too, they should share the same war aims. But, in reality, they seldom do. Nor do war aims have to be completely congruent for there to be agreements to send and receive advisors.

Here then is where we find the ultimate source of friction, anxiety, and frustration for advisors in the field. No matter how difficult the pas de deux between forces proves to be at higher/strategic command or even diplomatic levels, advisors are the ones who have to live the contradictions on the ground, on a daily basis, and then must continue living with them afterward. This proves psychically costly, as T. E. Lawrence describes over and over again in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Lawrence knew the Arabs were fighting for freedom from foreign rule. At times he even seemed to consider their cause more his creation than theirs. But he also knew the British and Ftench were not about to give up their suzerainty in the Middle East—and it was a British uniform he wore, British pay he drew, and British adulation he ultimately sought.

Given Lawrence's penchant for fictionalization and his deeply conflicted nature, it is hard to know just how badly he felt he had betrayed the sharifs.[4] This is much easier to gauge in other cases. Nelson Miles, for instance, commanding officer of the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO), was quite impassioned about the fact that the United States sold its wartime allies, the nationalist Chinese, down the river after World War II (Miles 1950). Although Miles fought innumerable battles on the nationalists' behalf in Washington, his conscience suffered long afterward as a result of U.S. policy (Miles 1967). Malcom, who only recently has been allowed to publicly discuss his Korean War experiences, has been stumping hard to make up for years of classified silence. He also has been fighting to attain public recognition for the North Korean partisans he fought with whom both we and the South Koreans, essentially abandoned (Ben Malcom, personal communication: 11/8/01). Special Forces soldiers who participated in Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, just a decade ago, still speak bitterly about what they regard as the United States' betrayal of the Kurds. In fact, many Special Forces officers and soldiers now accept the fact that they are rarely sent abroad just to assist another military; they recognize that when the

United States has gotten what it needs the relationship is finished, never mind whether those on the receiving end have gotten everything they were promised.[5] Still, no matter how they rationalize it, *living* this is painful. Being made to quit before the situation on the ground merits quitting is not only disillusioning but can cause long-term emotional damage. It proves especially difficult given power flows that make advisors feel responsible *for* and not just *to*.

Anthropologists through the Looking Glass

As murky as an advisory situation can be, anthropologists would seem to have it tougher going in (more choices), but easier moving on (less power). What do I mean? We swear no allegiances, take no oath, and have no chain of command. We choose our own fieldwork sites, our own problems, and our own supervisors. There is nothing that we *have* to do. There are certain things we should not do. For instance, our one clear ethical rule is to do no harm. Or, to put this in more positive terms: We should conduct research according to the golden rule, treating others only as we would want to be treated ourselves. If we follow this, then our responsibilities to the people we study should be congruent with our responsibilities to those we study them for. Indeed, if we apply the golden rule, we should be thinking about both groups as if they are one. However, it also can be argued that anyone who thinks that this is how s/he operates is as self-deluding as Sergeant Cornett. That is because we, much like advisors, engage in an exchange relationship with locals whenever we conduct fieldwork. We seek to gain data, information, knowledge, and, ideally, understanding about some other way of life. What do we offer in exchange? Sometimes we are able to pay people money or we give them gifts. Otherwise, we may help them practice their English and serve as entertainment. Invariably, when asked why we do what we do, we say something like "So people who don't understand what your lives are like can better appreciate you." This is the truth as we fervently believe it, but by saying this we are also leading people to believe that they will receive some intangible benefit from our research later on and that this will be as useful to them as something concrete in the here and now.

Contrast this with what advisors offer. Often advisors, too, promise more than they can deliver—especially since, seeing what they have, people routinely expect them to be able to provide more than they possibly can. Even so, advisors are doers. If they are allowed to, they can build or demolish things, heal or hurt people, and teach and train new skills. We—as

anthropologists—just extract information and, at most, interpret between cultures. Or, at least, that is what we are limited to doing if we intend to stay empathic and unbiased. If not, we can become advocates.

For all the reasons already given, however, we no more can become natives than advisors can. Adopted members of a tribe, fictive kin—yes. But a native as far as the natives are concerned—never. Nor can we think like natives and remain anthropologists, unless the natives we study are ourselves. That leaves us with advocacy, although it is not clear that we have any right to really speak *for* anyone either. Ironically, this brings us much closer to military advisors' bind than most anthropologists might like to admit. Although as recently as Vietnam, advisors in some places could still think *for* the locals—Donovan, for instance, could, though Vann could not—that was already three decades ago. People everywhere in the world have only grown more self-aware. Consider Operation Focus Relief, the recent effort by the United States to have Special Forces soldiers "train" seven battalions of West African peacekeepers, thereby sensitizing them to human rights abuses: "Nigerians welcomed the proffered equipment but bristled at training. Citing their greater combat experience, they saw little to gain from U.S. instruction" (Leatherwood 2001/2002:81).

No population appears to be as unsophisticated or as naïve as we once could assume people to be. Nor do people elsewhere seem quite so willing to accept the exchanges we suggest for the reasons we give. Of course, the argument can be—and has been—made that no one ever did (cf. Asad [ed.] 1973; Marcus and Fischer 1986). Politics are inherent in all exchanges. Without question, too, the most effective military advisors have always recognized this and have used their status as non-natives to distinct advantage. Can the same be said for anthropologists? Absolutely. For decades now, the discipline has recognized the significance of power flows and the extent to which ethnographers consciously or unconsciously avail themselves of them. But despite our *intellectually* acknowledging this, we are still easily seduced by the fantasy: There is probably not an anthropologist among us who, in venturing to the field for the first (or even second or third) time, does not want to be the exception. Who among us does not want to be considered at one with *our* people? If not inherent in those of us who choose to be anthropologists, this desire may simply be part and parcel of what we do. After all, even if we can not get the natives to buy us as one of them, this is certainly how we vie to be regarded by one another, proving once again that positioning is everything and being looked up to as knowing more is best of all.

Notes

Having taught my military advisor class five times, I owe much to all the officers who have passed through it, many of whom have served or are serving as advisors themselves; to Joe Andrade, who served as an advisor in El Salvador and has always advised me (and our students) about advising; to Lee Edwards, who served as an advisor in Vietnam and whose discussions about his experiences and comments on this chapter serve as a reminder that I am barely scratching the surface.

1. Here it should be noted that Lansdale, on a subsequent assignment, failed to get South Vietnam's president, Ngo Dinh Diem, to substantively reform his government—a mission he was given by the U.S. government after his success in the Philippines. However, unlike Magsaysay, Diem was already in power. Thus, Lansdale was not in the role of kingmaker. Worse, he had to compete for Diem's attention with other advisors (both American and French).
2. For what it meant to act or be Vietnamese, see Jamieson (1993).
3. These are the same sort of sentiments, at a much broader level, that account for many combat veterans' membership in associations like the American Legion, the VFW, and the like.
4. Michael Asher convincingly demonstrates that portions of Lawrence's *Seven Pillars* are fictionalized.
5. This is well described in the final pages of Shachochis (1999).

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