

Why Arabs Lose Wars

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Arabic-speaking armies have been generally ineffective in the modern era. Egyptian regular forces did poorly against Yemeni irregulars in the 1960s.¹ Syrians could only impose their will in Lebanon during the mid-1970s by the use of overwhelming weaponry and numbers.² Iraqis showed ineptness against an Iranian military ripped apart by revolutionary turmoil in the 1980s and could not win a three-decades-long war against the Kurds.³ The Arab military performance on both sides of the 1990 Kuwait war was mediocre.⁴ And the Arabs have done poorly in nearly all the military confrontations with Israel. Why this unimpressive record? There are many factors—economic, ideological, technical—but perhaps the most important has to do with culture and certain societal attributes which inhibit Arabs from producing an effective military force.

It is a truism of military life that an army fights as it trains, and so I draw on my many years of firsthand observation of Arabs in training to draw conclusions about the ways in which they go into combat. The following impressions derive from personal experience with Arab military establishments in the capacity of U.S. military attaché and security assistance officer, observer officer with the British-officer Trucial Oman Scouts (the security force in the emirates prior to the establishment of the United Arab Emirates), as well as some thirty year's study of the Middle East.

False Starts

Including culture in strategic assessments has a poor legacy, for it has often been spun from an ugly brew of ignorance, wishful thinking, and mythology. Thus, the U.S. army in the 1930s evaluated the Japanese national character as lacking originality and drew the unwarranted conclusion that the country would be permanently disadvantaged in technology.⁵ Hitler dismissed the United States as a mongrel society⁶ and consequently underestimated the impact of America's entry into the war. As these examples suggest, when culture is considered in calculating the relative strengths and weaknesses of opposing forces, it tends to lead to wild distortions, especially when it is a matter of understanding why states unprepared for war enter into combat flushed with confidence. The temptation is to impute cultural attributes to the enemy state that negate its superior numbers or weaponry. Or the opposite: to view the potential enemy through the prism of one's own cultural norms. American strategists assumed that the pain threshold of the North Vietnamese approximated their own and that the air bombardment of the North would bring it to its knees.⁷ Three days of aerial attacks were thought to be all the Serbs could withstand; in fact, seventy-eight days were needed.

It is particularly dangerous to make facile assumptions about abilities in warfare based on past performance, for societies evolve and so does the military subculture with it. The dismal French performance in the 1870 Franco-Prussian war led the German high command to an overly optimistic assessment prior to World War I.⁸ The tenacity and courage of French soldiers in World War I led everyone from Winston Churchill to the German high command vastly to overestimate the French army's fighting abilities.⁹ Israeli generals underestimated the Egyptian army of 1973 based on Egypt's hapless performance in the 1967 war.¹⁰

Culture is difficult to pin down. It is not synonymous with an individual's race nor ethnic identity. The history of warfare makes a mockery of attempts to assign rigid cultural attributes to individuals—as the military histories of the Ottoman and Roman empires illustrate. In both cases it was training, discipline, esprit, and élan which made the difference, not the individual soldiers' origin.¹¹ The highly disciplined, effective Roman legions, for example, were recruited from throughout the Roman empire, and the elite Ottoman Janissaries (slave soldiers) were Christians forcibly recruited as boys from the Balkans.

The Role of Culture

These problems notwithstanding, culture does need to be taken into account. Indeed, awareness of prior mistakes should make it possible to assess the role of cultural factors in warfare. John Keegan, the eminent historian of warfare, argues that culture is a prime determinant of the nature of warfare. In contrast to the usual manner of European warfare which he terms "face to face," Keegan depicts the early Arab armies in the Islamic era as masters of evasion, delay, and indirection.¹² Examining Arab warfare in this century leads to the conclusion that Arabs remain more successful in insurgent, or political warfare¹³—what T. E. Lawrence termed "winning wars without battles."¹⁴ Even the much-lauded Egyptian crossing of the Suez in 1973 at its core entailed a masterful deception plan. It may well be that these seemingly permanent attributes result from a culture that engenders subtlety, indirection, and dissimulation in personal relationships.¹⁵

Along these lines, Kenneth Pollack concludes his exhaustive study of Arab military effectiveness by noting that "certain patterns of behavior fostered by the dominant Arab culture were the most important factors contributing to the limited military effectiveness of Arab armies and air forces from 1945 to 1991."¹⁶ These attributes included over-centralization, discouraging initiative, lack of flexibility, manipulation of information, and the discouragement of leadership at the junior officer level.

The barrage of criticism leveled at Samuel Huntington's notion of a "clash of civilizations"¹⁷ in no way lessens the vital point he made—that however much the grouping of peoples by religion and culture rather than political or economic divisions offends academics who propound a world defined by class, race, and gender, it is a reality, one not diminished by modern communications.

But how does one integrate the study of culture into military training? At present, it has hardly any role. Paul M. Belbutowski, a scholar and former member of the U.S. Delta Force, succinctly stated a deficiency in our own military education system: "Culture, comprised of all that is vague and intangible, is not generally integrated into strategic planning except at the most superficial level."¹⁸ And yet it is precisely "all that is vague and intangible" which defines low-intensity conflicts. The Vietnamese communists did not fight the war the United States had trained for, nor did the Chechens and Afghans fight the war the Russians prepared for. This entails far more than simply retooling weaponry and retraining soldiers. It requires an understanding of the enemy's cultural mythology, history, attitude toward time, etc.—demanding a more substantial investment in time and money than a bureaucratic organization is likely to authorize.

Mindful of walking through a minefield of past errors and present cultural sensibilities, I offer some assessments of the role of culture in the military training of Arabic-speaking officers. I confine myself principally to training for two reasons. First, I observed much training but only one combat campaign (the Jordanian Army against the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1970). Secondly, armies fight as they train. Troops are conditioned by peacetime habits, policies, and procedures; they do not undergo a sudden metamorphosis that transforms civilians in uniform into warriors. General George Patton was fond of relating the story about Julius Caesar, who "In the winter time ... so trained his legions in all that became soldiers and so habituated them to the proper performance of their duties, that when in the spring he

committed them to battle against the Gauls, it was not necessary to give them orders, for they knew what to do and how to do it."¹⁹

Information as Power

In every society information is a means of making a living or wielding power, but Arabs husband information and hold it especially tightly. U.S. trainers have often been surprised over the years by the fact that information provided to key personnel does not get much further than them. Having learned to perform some complicated procedure, an Arab technician knows that he is invaluable so long as he is the only one in a unit to have that knowledge; once he dispenses it to others he no longer is the only font of knowledge and his power dissipates. This explains the commonplace hoarding of manuals, books, training pamphlets, and other training or logistics literature. On one occasion, an American mobile training team working with armor in Egypt at long last received the operators' manuals that had laboriously been translated into Arabic. The American trainers took the newly-minted manuals straight to the tank park and distributed them to the tank crews. Right behind them, the company commander, a graduate of the armor school at Fort Knox and specialized courses at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds ordnance school, collected the manuals from the crews. Questioned why he did this, the commander said that there was no point in giving them to the drivers because enlisted men could not read. In point of fact, he did not want enlisted men to have an independent source of knowledge. Being the only person who can explain the fire control instrumentation or boresight artillery weapons brings prestige and attention. In military terms this means that very little cross-training is accomplished and that, for instance in a tank crew, the gunners, loaders, and drivers might be proficient in their jobs but are not prepared to fill in for a casualty. Not understanding one another's jobs also inhibits a smoothly functioning crew. At a higher level it means there is no depth in technical proficiency.

Education Problems

Training tends to be unimaginative, cut and dried, and not challenging. Because the Arab educational system is predicated on rote memorization, officers have a phenomenal ability to commit vast amounts of knowledge to memory. The learning system tends to consist of on-high lectures, with students taking voluminous notes and being examined on what they were told. (It also has interesting implications for foreign instructors; for example, his credibility is diminished if he must resort to a book.) The emphasis on memorization has a price, and that is in diminished ability to reason or engage in analysis based upon general principles. Thinking outside the box is not encouraged; doing so in public can damage a career. Instructors are not challenged and neither, in the end, are students.

Head-to-head competition among individuals is generally avoided, at least openly, for it means that someone wins and someone else loses, with the loser humiliated. This taboo has particular import when a class contains mixed ranks. Education is in good part sought as a matter of personal prestige, so Arabs in U.S. military schools take pains to ensure that the ranking member, according to military position or social class, scores the highest marks in the class. Often this leads to "sharing answers" in class—often in a rather overt manner or junior officers concealing scores higher than their superior's.

American military instructors dealing with Middle Eastern students learn to ensure that, before directing any question to a student in a classroom situation, particularly if he is an officer, the student does possess the correct answer. If this is not assured, the officer will feel he has been set up for public humiliation. Furthermore, in the often-paranoid environment of Arab political culture, he will believe this setup to have been purposeful. This student will then become an enemy of the instructor and his classmates will become apprehensive about their also being singled out for humiliation—and learning becomes impossible.

Officers vs. Soldiers

Arab junior officers are well trained on the technical aspects of their weapons and tactical know-how, but not in leadership, a subject given little attention. For example, as General Sa'd ash-Shazli, the Egyptian chief of staff, noted in his assessment of the army he inherited prior to the 1973 war, they were not trained to seize the initiative or volunteer original concepts or new ideas.²⁰ Indeed, leadership may be the greatest weakness of Arab training systems. This problem results from two main factors: a highly accentuated class system bordering on a caste system, and lack of a non-commissioned-officer development program.

Most Arab officers treat enlisted soldiers like sub-humans. When the winds in Egypt one day carried biting sand particles from the desert during a demonstration for visiting U.S. dignitaries, I watched as a contingent of soldiers marched in and formed a single rank to shield the Americans; Egyptian soldiers, in other words, are used on occasion as nothing more than a windbreak. The idea of taking care of one's men is found only among the most elite units in the Egyptian military. On a typical weekend, officers in units stationed outside Cairo will get in their cars and drive off to their homes, leaving the enlisted men to fend for themselves by trekking across the desert to a highway and flagging down busses or trucks to get to the Cairo rail system. Garrison cantonments have no amenities for soldiers. The same situation, in various degrees, exists elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking countries—less so in Jordan, even more so in Iraq and Syria.

The young draftees who make up the bulk of the Egyptian army hate military service for good reason and will do almost anything, including self-mutilation, to avoid it. In Syria the wealthy buy exemptions or, failing that, are assigned to noncombatant organizations. As a young Syrian told me, his musical skills came from his assignment to a Syrian army band where he learned to play an instrument. In general, the militaries of the Fertile Crescent enforce discipline by fear; in countries where a tribal system still is in force, such as Saudi Arabia, the innate egalitarianism of the society mitigates against fear as the prime motivator, so a general lack of discipline pervades.²¹

The social and professional gap between officers and enlisted men is present in all armies, but in the United States and other Western forces, the noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps bridges it. Indeed, a professional NCO corps has been critical for the American military to work at its best; as the primary trainers in a professional army, NCOs are critical to training programs and to the enlisted men's sense of unit esprit. Most of the Arab world either has no NCO corps or it is non-functional, severely handicapping the military's effectiveness. With some exceptions, NCOs are considered in the same low category as enlisted men and so do not serve as a bridge between enlisted men and officers. Officers instruct but the wide social gap between enlisted man and officer tends to make the learning process perfunctory, formalized, and ineffective. The show-and-tell aspects of training are frequently missing because officers refuse to get their hands dirty and prefer to ignore the more practical aspects of their subject matter, believing this below their social station. A dramatic example of this occurred during the Gulf war when a severe windstorm blew down the tents of Iraqi officer prisoners of war. For three days they stayed in the wind and rain rather than be observed by enlisted prisoners in a nearby camp working with their hands.

The military price for this is very high. Without the cohesion supplied by NCOs, units tend to disintegrate in the stress of combat. This is primarily a function of the fact that the enlisted soldiers simply do not trust their officers. Once officers depart the training areas, training begins to fall apart as soldiers begin drifting off. An Egyptian officer once explained to me that the Egyptian army's catastrophic defeat in 1967 resulted from a lack of cohesion within units. The situation, he said, had only marginally improved in 1973. Iraqi prisoners in 1991 showed a remarkable fear and enmity toward their officers.

Decision-making and Responsibility

Decisions are made and delivered from on high, with very little lateral communication. This leads to a highly centralized system, with authority hardly ever delegated. Rarely does an

officer make a critical decision on his own; instead, he prefers the safe course of being identified as industrious, intelligent, loyal—and compliant. Bringing attention to oneself as an innovator or someone prone to make unilateral decisions is a recipe for trouble. As in civilian life, conformism is the overwhelming societal norm; the nail that stands up gets hammered down. Orders and information flow from top to bottom; they are not to be reinterpreted, amended, or modified in any way.

U.S. trainers often experience frustration obtaining a decision from a counterpart, not realizing that the Arab officer lacks the authority to make the decision—a frustration amplified by the Arab's understandable reluctance to admit that he lacks that authority. This author has several times seen decisions that could have been made at the battalion level concerning such matters as class meeting times and locations requiring approval from the ministry of defense. All of which has led American trainers to develop a rule of thumb: a sergeant first class in the U.S. Army has as much authority as a colonel in an Arab army. Methods of instruction and subject matter are dictated from higher authorities. Unit commanders have very little to say about these affairs. The politicized nature of the Arab militaries means that political factors weigh heavily and frequently override military considerations. Officers with initiative and a predilection for unilateral action pose a threat to the regime. This can be seen not just at the level of national strategy but in every aspect of military operations and training. If Arab militaries became less politicized and more professional in preparation for the 1973 war with Israel,²² once the fighting ended, old habits returned. Now, an increasingly bureaucratized military establishment weighs in as well. A veteran of the Pentagon turf wars will feel like a kindergartner when he encounters the rivalries that exist in the Arab military headquarters.

Taking responsibility for a policy, operation, status, or training program rarely occurs. U.S. trainers can find it very frustrating when they repeatedly encounter Arab officers placing blame for unsuccessful operations or programs on the U.S. equipment or some other outside source. A high rate of non-operational U.S. equipment is blamed on a "lack of spare parts"—pointing a finger at an unresponsive U.S. supply system despite the fact that American trainers can document ample supplies arriving in country and disappearing in a malfunctioning supply system. (Such criticism was never caustic or personal and often so indirect and politely delivered that it wasn't until after a meeting that oblique references were understood.) This imperative works even at the most exalted levels. During the Kuwait war, Iraqi forces took over the town of Khafji in northeast Saudi Arabia after the Saudis had evacuated the place. General Khalid bin Sultan, the Saudi ground forces commander, requested a letter from General Norman Schwarzkopf, stating it was the U.S. general who ordered an evacuation from the Saudi town.²³ And in his account of the Khafji battle, General Bin Sultan predictably blames the Americans for the Iraqi occupation of the town.²⁴ In reality the problem was that the light Saudi forces in the area left the battlefield.²⁵ The Saudis were in fact outgunned and outnumbered by the Iraqi unit approaching Khafji but Saudi pride required that foreigners be blamed.

As for equipment, a vast cultural gap exists between the U.S. and Arab maintenance and logistics systems. The Arab difficulties with U.S. equipment are not, as sometimes simplistically believed, a matter of "Arabs don't do maintenance," but something much deeper. The American concept of a weapons system does not convey easily. A weapons system brings with it specific maintenance and logistics procedures, policies, and even a philosophy, all of them based on U.S. culture, with its expectations of a certain educational level, sense of small unit responsibility, tool allocation, and doctrine. Tools that would be allocated to a U.S. battalion (a unit of some 600-800 personnel) would most likely be found at a much higher level—probably two or three echelons higher—in an Arab army. The expertise, initiative and, most importantly, the trust indicated by delegation of responsibility to a lower level are rare. The U.S. equipment and its maintenance are predicated on a concept of repair at the lowest level and therefore require delegation of authority. Without the needed tools, spare parts, or expertise available to keep equipment running, and loathe to report bad news to his superiors, the unit commander looks for scapegoats. All this explains why I many times heard in Egypt that U.S. weaponry is "too delicate."

I have observed many in-country U.S. survey teams: invariably, hosts make the case for acquiring the most modern of military hardware and do everything to avoid issues of maintenance, logistics, and training. They obfuscate and mislead to such an extent that U.S. teams, no matter how earnest their sense of mission, find it nearly impossible to help. More generally, Arab reluctance to be candid about training deficiencies makes it extremely difficult for foreign advisors properly to support instruction or assess training needs.

Combined Arms Operations

A lack of cooperation is most apparent in the failure of all Arab armies to succeed at combined arms operations. A regular Jordanian army infantry company, for example, is man-for-man as good as a comparable Israeli company; at battalion level, however, the coordination required for combined arms operations, with artillery, air, and logistics support, is simply absent. Indeed, the higher the echelon, the greater the disparity. This results from infrequent combined arms training; when it does take place, it is intended to impress visitors (which it does—the dog-and-pony show is usually done with uncommon gusto and theatrical talent) rather than provide real training.

This problem results from three main factors. First, the well-known lack of trust among Arabs for anyone outside their own family adversely affects offensive operations.²⁶ Exceptions to this pattern are limited to elite units (which throughout the Arab world have the same duty—to protect the regime, rather than the country). In a culture in which almost every sphere of human endeavor, including business and social relationships, is based on a family structure, this orientation is also present in the military, particularly in the stress of battle. Offensive action, basically, consists of fire and maneuver. The maneuver element must be confident that supporting units or arms are providing covering fire. If there is a lack of trust in that support, getting troops moving forward against dug-in defenders is possible only by officers getting out front and leading, something that has not been a characteristic of Arab leadership.

Second, the complex mosaic system of peoples creates additional problems for training, as rulers in the Middle East make use of the sectarian and tribal loyalties to maintain power. The 'Alawi minority controls Syria, East Bankers control Jordan, Sunnis control Iraq, and Nejdis control Saudi Arabia. This has direct implications for the military, where sectarian considerations affect assignments and promotions. Some minorities (such as the Circassians in Jordan or the Druze in Syria) tie their well-being to the ruling elite and perform critical protection roles; others (such as the Shi'a of Iraq) are excluded from the officer corps. In any case, the assignment of officers based on sectarian considerations works against assignments based on merit.

The same lack of trust operates at the interstate level, where Arab armies exhibit very little trust of each other, and with good reason. The blatant lie Gamal Abdel Nasser told King Husayn in June 1967 to get him into the war against Israel—that the Egyptian air force was over Tel Aviv (when most of its planes had been destroyed)—was a classic example of deceit.²⁷ Sadat's disingenuous approach to the Syrians to entice them to enter the war in October 1973 was another (he told them that the Egyptians were planning total war, a deception which included using a second set of operational plans intended only for Syrian eyes).²⁸ With this sort of history, it is no wonder that there is very little cross or joint training among Arab armies and very few command exercises. During the 1967 war, for example, not a single Jordanian liaison officer was stationed in Egypt, nor were the Jordanians forthcoming with the Egyptian command.²⁹

Third, Middle Eastern rulers routinely rely on balance-of-power techniques to maintain their authority.³⁰ They use competing organizations, duplicate agencies, and coercive structures dependent upon the ruler's whim. This makes building any form of personal power base difficult, if not impossible, and keeps the leadership apprehensive and off-balance, never secure in its careers or social position. The same applies within the military; a powerful chairman of the joint chiefs is inconceivable.

Joint commands are paper constructs that have little actual function. Leaders look at joint commands, joint exercises, combined arms, and integrated staffs very cautiously for all Arab armies are a double-edged sword. One edge points toward the external enemy and the other toward the capital. The land forces are at once a regime-maintenance force and threat at the same time. No Arab ruler will allow combined operations or training to become routine; the usual excuse is financial expense, but that is unconvincing given their frequent purchase of hardware whose maintenance costs they cannot afford. In fact, combined arms exercises and joint staffs create familiarity, soften rivalries, erase suspicions, and eliminate the fragmented, competing organizations that enable rulers to play off rivals against one another. This situation is most clearly seen in Saudi Arabia, where the land forces and aviation are under the minister of defense, Prince Sultan, while the National Guard is under Prince Abdullah, the deputy prime minister and crown prince. In Egypt, the Central Security Forces balance the army. In Iraq and Syria, the Republican Guard does the balancing.

Politicians actually create obstacles to maintain fragmentation. For example, obtaining aircraft from the air force for army airborne training, whether it is a joint exercise or a simple administrative request for support of training, must generally be coordinated by the heads of services at the ministry of defense; if a large number of aircraft are involved, this probably requires presidential approval. Military coups may be out of style, but the fear of them remains strong. Any large-scale exercise of land forces is a matter of concern to the government and is closely observed, particularly if live ammunition is being used. In Saudi Arabia a complex system of clearances required from area military commanders and provincial governors, all of whom have differing command channels to secure road convoy permission, obtaining ammunition, and conducting exercises, means that in order for a coup to work, it would require a massive amount of loyal conspirators. Arab regimes have learned how to be coup-proof.

Security and Paranoia

Arab regimes classify virtually everything vaguely military. Information the U.S. military routinely publishes (about promotions, transfers, names of unit commanders, and unit designations) is top secret in Arabic-speaking countries. To be sure, this does make it more difficult for the enemy to construct an accurate order of battle, but it also feeds the divisive and compartmentalized nature of the military forces. The obsession with security can reach ludicrous lengths. Prior to the 1973 war, Sadat was surprised to find that within two weeks of the date he had ordered the armed forces be ready for war, his minister of war, General Muhammad Sadiq, had failed to inform his immediate staff of the order. Should a war, Sadat wondered, be kept secret from the very people expected to fight it?³¹ One can expect to have an Arab counterpart or key contact to be changed without warning and with no explanation as to his sudden absence. This might well be simply a transfer a few doors down the way, but the vagueness of it all leaves foreigners with dire scenarios—scenarios that might be true. And it is best not to inquire too much; advisors or trainers who seem overly inquisitive may find their access to host military information or facilities limited.

The presumed close U.S.-Israel relationship, thought to be operative at all levels, aggravates and complicates this penchant for secrecy. Arabs believe that the most mundane details about them are somehow transmitted to the Mossad via a secret hotline. This explains why a U.S. advisor with Arab forces is likely to be asked early and often about his opinion of the "Palestine problem," then subjected to monologues on the presumed Jewish domination of the United States.

Indifference to Safety

In terms of safety measures, there is a general laxness, a seeming carelessness and indifference to training accidents, many of which could have been prevented by minimal efforts. To the (perhaps overly) safety-conscious Americans, Arab societies appear indifferent to casualties and show a seemingly lackadaisical approach to training safety. There are a

number of explanations for this. Some would point to the inherent fatalism within Islam,³² and certainly anyone who has spent considerable time in Arab taxis would lend credence to that theory, but perhaps the reason is less religiously based and more a result of political culture. As any military veteran knows, the ethos of a unit is set at the top; or, as the old saying has it, units do those things well that the boss cares about. When the top political leadership displays a complete lack of concern for the welfare of its soldiers, such attitudes percolate down through the ranks. Exhibit A was the betrayal of Syrian troops fighting Israel in the Golan in 1967: having withdrawn its elite units, the Syrian government knowingly broadcast the falsehood that Israeli troops had captured the town of Kuneitra, which would have put them behind the largely conscript Syrian army still in position. The leadership took this step to pressure the great powers to impose a truce, though it led to a panic by the Syrian troops and the loss of the Golan Heights.³³

Conclusion

It would be difficult to exaggerate the cultural gulf separating American and Arab military cultures. In every significant area, American military advisors find students who enthusiastically take in their lessons and then resolutely fail to apply them. The culture they return to—the culture of their own armies in their own countries—defeats the intentions with which they took leave of their American instructors.

When they had an influence on certain Arab military establishments, the Soviets reinforced their clients' cultural traits far more than, in more recent years, Americans were able to. Like the Arabs', the Soviets' military culture was driven by political fears bordering on paranoia. The steps taken to control the sources (real or imagined) of these fears, such as a rigidly centralized command structure, were readily understood by Arab political and military elites. The Arabs, too, felt an affinity for the Soviet officer class's contempt for ordinary soldiers and the Soviet military hierarchy's distrust of a well-developed, well-appreciated, well-rewarded NCO corps.

Arab political culture is based on a high degree of social stratification, very much like that of the defunct Soviet Union and very much unlike the upwardly mobile, meritocratic, democratic United States. Arab officers do not see any value in sharing information among themselves, let alone with their men. In this they follow the example of their political leaders, who not only withhold information from their own allies, but routinely deceive them. Training in Arab armies reflects this: rather than prepare as much as possible for the multitude of improvised responsibilities that are thrown up in the chaos of battle, Arab soldiers, and their officers, are bound in the narrow functions assigned them by their hierarchy. That this renders them less effective on the battlefield, let alone places their lives at greater risk, is scarcely of concern, whereas, of course, these two issues are dominant in the American military culture, and are reflected in American military training.

Change is unlikely to come until it occurs in the larger Arab political culture, although the experience of other societies (including our own) suggests that the military can have a democratizing influence on the larger political culture, as officers bring the lessons of their training first into their professional environment, then into the larger society. It obviously makes a big difference, however, when the surrounding political culture is not only avowedly democratic (as are many Middle Eastern states), but functionally so. Until Arab politics begin to change at fundamental levels, Arab armies, whatever the courage or proficiency of individual officers and men, are unlikely to acquire the range of qualities which modern fighting forces require for success on the battlefield. For these qualities depend on inculcating respect, trust, and openness among the members of the armed forces at all levels, and this is the marching music of modern warfare that Arab armies, no matter how much they emulate the corresponding steps, do not want to hear.

- ¹ Saeed M. Badeeb, *The Saudi-Egyptian Conflict over North Yemen 1962-1970*, (Boulder, Westview Press: 1986), pp. 33-42.
- ² R. D. McLaurin, *The Battle of Zahle* (Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md.: Human Engineering Laboratory, Sept. 1986), pp. 26-27.
- ³ Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 89-98; Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 22-223, 233- 234.
- ⁴ Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness" (Ph.d. diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996), pp. 259-261 (Egypt); pp. 533-536 (Saudi Arabia); pp. 350-355 (Iraq). Syrians did not see significant combat in the 1991 Gulf war but my conversations with U.S. personnel in liaison with them indicated a high degree of paranoia and distrust toward Americans and other Arabs.
- ⁵ David Kahn, "United States Views of Germany and Japan," *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Before the Two World Wars*, ed., Ernest R. May (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 476-503.
- ⁶ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1970), p. 21.
- ⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 18.
- ⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 186-187. The German assessment from T. Dodson Stamps and Vincent J. Esposito, eds., *A Short History of World War I* (West Point, N.Y.: United States Military Academy, 1955), p. 8.
- ⁹ William Manchester, *Winston Spencer Churchill: The Last Lion Alone, 1932-1940* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1988), p. 613; Ernest R. May "Conclusions," *Knowing One's Enemies*, pp. 513-514. Hitler thought otherwise, however.
- ¹⁰ Avraham (Bren) Adan, *On the Banks of the Suez* (San Francisco: Presideo Press, 1980), pp. 73-86. "Thus the prevailing feeling of security, based on the assumption that the Arabs were incapable of mounting an overall war against us, distorted our view of the situation," Moshe Dayan stated. "As for the fighting standard of the Arab soldiers, I can sum it up in one sentence: they did not run away." *Moshe Dayan: Story of My Life* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976), p. 510.
- ¹¹ John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 18.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 387
- ¹³ John Walter Jandora, *Militarism in Arab Society: A Historiographical and Bibliographical Sourcebook* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 128.
- ¹⁴ T. E. Lawrence, *The Evolution of a Revolt* (Ft. Leavenworth Kans.: CSI, 1990), p. 21. (A reprint of article originally published in *the British Army Quarterly and Defense Journal*, Oct. 1920.)
- ¹⁵ Author's observations buttressed by such scholarly works as Eli Shouby, "The Influence of the Arabic Language on the Psychology of the Arabs," *Readings in Arab Middle Eastern Societies and Culture*, ed. Abdullah M. Lutfiyya and Charles Churchill (The Hague: Mouton Co., 1970), pp. 688-703; Hisham Shirabi and Muktar Ani, "Impact of Class and Culture on Social Behavior: The Feudal-Bourgeois Family in Arab Society," *Psychological Dimensions of Near Eastern Studies*, ed. L. Carl Brown and Norman Itzkowitz (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1977), pp. 240-256; Sania Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), pp. 28-85; Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), pp. 20-85.
- ¹⁶ Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture," p. 759.
- ¹⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, pp. 21-49.
- ¹⁸ Paul M. Belbutowski, "Strategic Implications of Cultures in Conflict," *Parameters*, Spring 1996, pp. 32-42.
- ¹⁹ Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1996), p. 383.
- ²⁰ Saad el-Shazly, *The Crossing of the Suez* (San Francisco: American Mideast Research, 1980), p. 47.
- ²¹ Jordan may be an exception here; however, most observers agree that its effectiveness has declined in the past twenty years.
- ²² Pollack, "The Influence of Arab Culture," pp. 256-257.
- ²³ H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take A Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), p. 494.
- ²⁴ Khaled bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior: A Personal View of the War by the Joint Forces*

Commander (New York: Harper-Collins, 1995), pp. 368-69.

²⁵ Based on discussions with U.S. personnel in the area and familiar with the battle.

²⁶ Yesoshat Harkabi, "Basic Factors in the Arab Collapse During the Six Day War," *Orbis*, Fall 1967, pp. 678-679.

²⁷ James Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan, Searching for a Just and Lasting Peace: A Political Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1989), p. 99.

²⁸ Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 197-99; Shazly, *Crossing of the Suez*, pp. 21, 37.

²⁹ Samir A. Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 161.

³⁰ James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd Ed. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1990), p. 262.

³¹ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 235.

³² Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs*, pp. 184-193; Patai, *The Arab Mind*, pp. 147-150.

³³ Joseph Malone, "Syria and the Six-Day War," *Current Affairs Bulletin*, Jan. 26, 1968, p. 80.