



ANTIQUITIES AND CONFLICT: CHANGING MILITARY STRATEGY

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Once treated as purely a criminal problem, the looting and sale of illicit antiquities has recently become matter of national security. The frequent contact between the U.S. military and non-state actors, namely Islamic terrorist organizations, demands a doctrinal change in how military strategy accounts for cultural heritage. The U.S. government and the Department of Defense should give greater precedence to the protection of movable cultural heritage in wartime in order to diminish the capabilities of terrorist organizations who remain the preeminent threat to the safety and security of the United States.

Set against the backdrop of cultural identity in the Middle East, this work establishes the nexus between movable cultural heritage and the success of military strategy by retracing the historical role antiquities plays in warfare and their current use as a funding mechanism for Islamic terrorist organizations. The thrust of this piece aims to demonstrate why antiquities, traditionally a criminal matter, should take greater priority within

military circles. Safeguarding a community's historical sites and movable cultural heritage in conflict provides U.S. forces an operational advantage in securing the support of the local population and preempts the theft of priceless antiquities that fund adversarial organizations. Preventing cultural heritage from entering the illicit market diminishes the financial capabilities, and thus, the operational effectiveness of terrorist organizations.

Narrow in scope, this piece is not intended to answer lingering legal questions of private property and national antiquities. Nor to address due diligence issues surrounding the legal sale and purchase of antiquities in the U.S. market. Instead, my project contributes a precise examination on the implications of trafficked, movable cultural heritage to U.S. national security and military doctrine.

The Non-state Actor and Cultural Heritage

The non-state actors — groups unaffiliated with an internationally recognized

government — represent the twenty-first century combatant. And terrorist organizations, primarily based in the Middle East, comprise the bulk of these unaligned parties. As a result, they remain the primary threat to and target of U.S. military forces. The enormous attention terrorist organizations have commanded from the international community and the U.S. military during the last three decades shows no signs of slowing.

Terrorist organizations continue to carry out attacks at a rate far greater than any time before. The Global Terrorism Index for 2015 demonstrated that deaths directly attributed to acts of terrorism increased 80 percent from 18,111 in 2014 to 32,685 the following year. The same report explained that five more countries experienced a terrorist attack in 2014 than the year prior, and six more countries experienced greater than 500 deaths related to terrorism than 2013. That represents over a 100 percent increase in terrorist-related death from 2013 to 2014. Moreover, these attacks are highly concentrated in the Greater Middle East. Terrorist attacks in Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan together represent over 50 percent of all attacks worldwide (Global Terrorism Index, 2015). Naturally then, Islamic terrorist organizations dominate the U.S. Department of State's list of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Once a mix of Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern organizations, the 59-member list now consists almost exclusively of Islamic or Islamic-themed factions. Islamic terrorist organizations now represent over 80 percent of the entire catalogue (U.S. Department of State, Foreign Terrorist Organizations).

The same actors identified in the State Department directory thrive in developing, weak and failed states. Indeed, these unaffiliated parties operate almost exclusively in those developing or non-industrialized nations where U.S. forces have operated for the last three decades. Beginning in Lebanon in 1982 through the Bosnian War in the mid-1990s and up through recent engagements in Iraq and

Afghanistan, U.S. armed forces have spent over 35 years operating almost exclusively in areas of weak governing authority. The aforementioned rise in terrorism suggests this trend will not change in the coming years. The last three decades of U.S. warfare indicates that even with the aggressive military maneuvers on the part of Russia and China in recent years, conflict between superpowers will likely be carried out through proxy-wars in some corner of the developing world.

In any case, Islamic terrorist organizations operate in those developing or failed states, particularly the Middle East, where U.S. armed forces have maintained a presence for decades. This reality is important for several reasons: (1) the greater Middle East is often home to the world's rarest and most valuable cultural heritage; (2) Islamic terrorist groups misuse cultural heritage to manipulate the outcome of war and are often reliant on the illicit market to fund their operations; (3) illicit antiquities network has a direct connection to U.S. markets but remains a narrow criminal matter. In short, the treatment of movable cultural heritage can have an immediate impact on military strategy and long-term impact on national security.

Defending Cultural Heritage

How U.S. armed forces respond to the looting or destruction of antiquities during conflict could well determine the course of the war. The statement alone seems irrefutable. After all, most military strategists recognize the value of cultural heritage to an indigenous population, beyond their mere market value. But the notion that the treatment of cultural heritage has the potential to undermine military operations also sounds somewhat exaggerated. Recall how former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dismissively said "stuff happens" after learning about the looting of the Iraq National Museum. He claimed the media inflated the problem by "recycling video of a single looter with a vase" (Rich, 2006). This flippancy belies an all-too-common underappreciation for artifacts and their wide-ranging impact on military operations.

Critics who bemoan the lack of military preparation or interest in protecting cultural heritage harbor their own misunderstandings. Detractors assume that the preservation of heritage should automatically be treated as a prewar priority based on international agreements (Stone & Farchakh, 2008). The longstanding and widely endorsed Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property of 1954, for example, defines cultural heritage as “movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people...buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property...[and] centers containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in sub-paragraphs.” (Hague Convention, 1954). The Hague Convention and The Geneva Convention also include provisions that require signatories to protect cultural heritage during conflict. However, since the United States has not ratified the agreement, the extent to which the military exercises the protection clause rests with the judgment of those executing a mission. “A country which has implemented the 1954 Hague Convention...is obliged to safeguard cultural property during conflict,” scholar Emma Cunliffe points out, “although it falls to the military organization to decide upon appropriate use of lethal force within that doctrine.” (Antiquities Coalition, 2016, p.38).

Critics also point to a shared human history as reason enough to protect the treasures of the international community. After all, unlike some countries in Europe and Asia, those developing nations that have experienced a U.S. military presence in the last four decades, more often than not, possess inadequate infrastructure to protect priceless artifacts. Their arguments often include ambiguous declarations of protecting “priceless treasures” or vague calls to “preserve the past” for future generations. But strategic objectives cannot be developed and tactical advantage cannot be achieved based on ambiguous language or academic affinities.

Few American citizens would presumably support sacrificing the lives of its soldiers

simply to protect a foreign monument. The U.S. military is not the enforcement arm of a tourism bureau. There exists then a disconnect then between criminal emphasis, military strategy and international mandates that demand the proactive protection of historical sites during armed conflict.

The solution should center on the very real connection between military strategy and the treatment of cultural heritage; a relationship that elevates the issues of cultural heritage to a national security matter. The U.S. military's presence in places with high volume cultural heritage, and the continued operations against those terrorist organizations embedded in the illegal antiquities market should be reason enough to make cultural heritage an integral part of war planning and a part of military training for those elite forces in close contact with enemy forces. But the more immediate need involves reconciling military objectives with preservation of cultural heritage during conflict by proving beyond a reasonable doubt that the treatment of cultural heritage can have a direct impact on defense strategies.

Identity in Cultural Heritage

The first element in bridging cultural heritage and military strategy involves a willingness to understand and appreciate the emotional attachment antiquities hold. How a given community observes the treatment of its artifacts, immeasurable as it may be, can have a measurable impact on military operations and U.S. national security as a whole.

The Department of Defense needs to equip its armed forces with a broader understanding antiquities and their role in cultural identity. The physical pieces are themselves valuable collectibles that can be used to fund illicit activity, to be sure. But such a reductionist perspective fails to fully comprehend the political and cultural implications attached to cultural heritage. Whether as a means of expressing identity or to preserve authority, antiquities play an important part in fostering cohesion,

centralizing power and creating conflict within a given society.

The role of movable cultural heritage in the formation of a cultural identity is foundational to understanding their impact on wartime operations. Charles Tripp, professor of politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, touched on this idea in the aftermath of the looting in Baghdad in 2003:

"This is really a terrible thing...One of the problems has been establishing an identity, a place in history and in the future. If you lose those documents you are subject to remolding of history which will be extremely dangerous" (Jehl & Becker, 2003).

Antiquities help shape individual, cultural and national identities. They offer characteristics that explain how someone or some group is situated in both time and place. Lyndel V. Prott and Patrick J. O'Keefe (1992) define cultural heritage as "manifestations of human life which represent a particular view of life and witness the history and validity of that view" (p. 307). This expression of cultural heritage "may be embodied in material things," such as antiquities - clothing, pottery, weaponry, among others. Indeed, the intrinsic or "immovable" attributions attached to antiquities have a primary importance to different cultures (Prott & O'Keefe, 1992, p. 307). And the erosion of identity through the damage of cultural heritage can quickly lead to a rise in violence and sectarianism.

Observers do not have to peer deep into Middle East society to see the power cultural heritage holds within a given society. Egypt and the contested country of Israel are both prime examples. For the Jewish state, antiquities play a crucial role in establishing a historical precedence for its founding. The movable heritage excavated from sites throughout the current state of Israel, especially the contested Temple Mount area, often serves as the political defense, the validation for the establishment of Israel in its current location ("A Powder Keg Left Unguarded," 2007). The Israeli government

reasons that legitimate archaeological processes have repeatedly unearthed tangible representations of a longstanding presence of the Hebrew people in the area; evidence of supreme importance since the Arab-Israeli conflict revolves primarily around the right of return for Palestinians and the historic birthright to the land for Israelis (Finkelstein & Schmidt, 2007; Price, 2001). Understanding this reality, some Palestinians have allegedly participated in the organized looting, sale and destruction of Hebrew artifacts from the Temple Mount area ("Cultural Without Context," 2001).

The same movable cultural heritage can act as a vehicle for diplomacy. After Israeli intelligence services received information in 1957 that Nazi fugitive Adolf Eichmann was living in Buenos Aires under an assumed name, a select group of Israeli operators captured Eichmann as he returned home from work on the evening of May 11, 1960 (Harel, 1975; Morris, 1991; Aharoni & Dietl, 1997; Arendt, 2006). The Israeli government approved the plan without notifying local Argentine officials. Soon after media outlets revealed that Israeli agents had absconded from Argentina with the outlaw Nazi, the Jewish state found itself having to repair the now fractured relationship with its angered South American ally.

A major step in the process of diplomatic reconciliation involved opening the first Israel-Argentina friendship league in Buenos Aires and used cultural relations as the basis for improving "the Israeli public's acquaintance with Argentina and to enhance Argentina's image," scholar Raanan Rein explains (Rein, 2002, p. 192). The Israeli government then delivered the priceless Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit to Buenos Aires in September 1960 in an especially risky decision since anti-Semitic reprisals continued throughout the city in the wake of the Eichmann capture. Although both governments claimed the exhibit was merely part of Argentina's independence celebration, the New York Times concluded with "little doubt...that the quality and breadth of the exposition

[was] connected with a more topical development – the case of Adolf Eichmann” (“Argentines See Dead Sea Scrolls,” 1960).

Whereas cultural heritage has aided in the justification for a Jewish state and helped shape a national Jewish identity, Egyptian antiquities have engendered a national debate. Donald Malcolm Reid, in his newest publication *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt* (2016), shows how the complex nature of cultural heritage in Egyptian identity led to years of shifting emphasis in the preservation and promotion of certain cultural heritage. The fluctuating interests in displaying or promoting certain antiquities and symbols over others illustrated, among other things, the unsettled dimensions of Egyptian identity.

Reid’s treatise highlights how the struggle over the ultimate expression of Egyptian identity caused shifts in emphasis among cultural heritage. Pharaonic pieces and Coptic antiquities fell in and out of vogue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century based largely on political need and social response. In an attempt to redefine Egypt’s character years later, leaders then jostled with notions of Arab-ness and “Islamic” art within the realm of cultural heritage. This debate, Reid points out, gained significant traction in the postcolonial era after locals became frustrated with the years of western control over the domestic excavation and preservation process. One could indeed point to this twentieth century fight as a contributor to politics of Cold War nonalignment and anti-Western foreign policy.

From pieces that reflected Arab ethnicity to those of Islamic representation, from resurrecting Pharaonic heritage in World War I to finding anti-colonial expression through antiquities during the Cold War, antiquities created an atmosphere of contested identity. Those subsequent debates had a remarkable influence on Egyptian politics and foreign policy.

A more sinister case of cultural manipulation emerged in Iraq after Saddam Hussein forcibly captured the presidency in 1979. In an extreme instance of hubris, the infamous dictator tried to recreate the glory days of the Babylon Empire by building on top of its ancient ruins approximately 50 miles south of Baghdad. Hussein began this process in earnest during the early 1990s. Famed archaeologists ridiculed the plan as “Disney for a Despot,” warning of irreparable damage to the existing site and reminded observers that, among other things, no one really knew what the palaces actually looked like (MacFarquhar, 2003). The project went forward despite its futility. Adding insult to international consternation, Ba’athist officials inscribed on the newest additions, “In the era of Saddam Hussein, who rebuilt civilisation and rebuilt Babylon” (Freeman, 2009).

Hussein was attempting to create a cult of personality through cultural heritage. But despite the vanity behind it all, as scholar Benjamin Isakhan explains, this extensive nation-building campaign also included reconstruction of archaeological sites and reinvigoration of state libraries and museums. The strategy proved “central to the formation of a variety of different identities” and was responsible for “at least some degree of social cohesion and inclusion” (Kila & Zeidler, 2013, p. 221). That cohesion bred an emotional attachment to cultural heritage, which engendered fierce and intense reactions to its mistreatment.

Another example of the affinity for cultural heritage surfaced after the civil war in Lebanon that raged from 1975 through 1990. The threats to Lebanon’s cherished National Museum led Emir Chehab, the director of antiquities, and his wife Olga to save much of the museum’s most treasured pieces. The two workers smuggled priceless artifacts to secret locations or stored them in upper floors of the building; shielded from munitions and looters by cement walls and reinforced barriers. The pair risked death by making irreplaceable Pharaonic Greek, Phoenician, and Roman pieces inaccessible to looters and other unauthorized people, to include occupying military forces (Moseley,

1983). Their relentless efforts in preserving these antiquities and the cooperation they secured from local officials in guarding it together showed a shared concern between government and private parties for the protection of their collective heritage.

This intense reaction to identity extends into other artistic arenas of cultural representation. Israel's Ambassador to Sweden physically attacked an art exhibit at the Museum of National Antiquities in Stockholm during the international conference on genocide in January 2004. According to media reports, Zvi Mazel became enraged, ripping out the electrical wires and tossing the spotlight, when he encountered the so-called "Snow White and the Madness of Truth." The conversational piece featured a grinning suicide bomber, Hanadi Jaradat, floating in a boat atop a basin filled with red fluid intended to represent blood. Mazel told the press later, "I became a bit emotional...there was the terrorist, wearing her perfect makeup and floating on the blood of my people." Jaradat had killed 22 people on October 4, 2004, when she detonated herself inside a packed Haifa restaurant (Myre, 2004).

Some officials hoped these powerful emotions could be channeled in the opposite direction during the volatile period following the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001. Curators and art experts believed Islamic Art and Middle Eastern cultural heritage could act as a "mediator for cultures in confrontation" (Riding, 2004). Galleries in Europe and the United States took measures to bring people together by displaying Islamic Art alongside related work from other cultures. The Louvre in Paris and the Met in the New York City, among others, hoped to "place Islamic Art within the context of universal culture" to help illustrate "the influence of Islamic Art on architecture and design in the West" (Riding, 2004). Many believed familiarity would help lessen the tension between cultures during this especially tense time.

Emotions even ran high when Ismail Khan returned to Herat, Afghanistan in 2001 to help build a new Afghan government after

U.S. forces had ousted the Taliban from power. Khan was cheered as a "favorite son...perhaps because he [had] ensured that the antiquities of his ancient city [were] not exported [during the reign of the Taliban] and because he [had] always encouraged the education of girls and women" (Perlez, 2001).

Military and government officials must remember, to borrow from Erik Nemeth, even "collateral damage of cultural property...erodes the identity of individuals for whom the military presence intends to provide stability" (Nemeth, 2015, p. 66).
Identity Matters in Conflict

Malleable as identity can be, cultural heritage still helps shape individuals, communities and nations, and threats to those representations create an intrinsic threat to self. And adversarial organizations understand any perceived mistreatment can negatively impact foreign military operations. This truth cannot be underestimated.

The destruction of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, Iraq on a February morning in 2006 provides a useful example. Likely a Sunni insurgent operation, according to then President George W. Bush, ushered in a remarkable period of sectarian violence. The destruction of the Shiite shrine in southern Iraq and one of the most revered sites among Shiite Muslims saw protesting mobs swarm the streets calling for "revenge and set[ting] fire to dozens of Sunni Mosques" (Worth, 2006). The violence engulfed major cities of Baghdad and Basra leading Prime Minister Ibrahim al Jaafari to call for a three-day mourning. President Bush even took the time to offer condolences and call for calm. The destruction of a major cultural heritage site made an already violate situation for U.S. forces that much more dangerous.

Anti-American militia used the apparent lack of security by "occupation forces" to exploit the simmering discontent with the U.S.-led war and used the incident to garner support for their efforts against American forces (Worth, 2006). Shiite leader in Iraq at

the time, Ayatollah Ali-Al-Sistani, made the obvious statement that many feared could be the ultimate undoing of Iraq should it resonate: "if government's security forces cannot provide the necessary protection, the believers will do it" (Worth, 2006).

The attack unleashed unprecedented sectarian violence, and widened the gap of trust between the people and U.S. forces. Ghassan Atiyah, an Iraqi political commentator, called subsequent sectarian divide the "Weimar period," referring to 1920 Germany, inferring that the situation would likely result in the disintegration of the country or the takeover of an authoritarian government (Cockburn, 2006). The Golden Dome did not singlehandedly provoke unparalleled violence. But it could be considered a turning point in what became a full-blown civil war. Nearly 900 U.S. and coalition personnel lost their lives during the period between the bombing in February 2006 and the so-called surge in 2007 – the fourth highest number of any year during Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq Coalition Causality Count, 2016).

A larger and equally problematic public relations battle ensued. After the bombing of the Golden Dome, the Iranian supreme leader, Shiite Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, chose to accuse American intelligence services and Israel for the bombings (Cockburn, 2006). The same Shia leader had already used the legal U.S. destruction of an insurgent-filled mosque in Fallujah in a 2004 to proclaim America's disregard for Iraq's cultural heritage. Iranian and Iraqi news outlets criticized U.S. forces for the "incalculable" damage to the Iraq's cultural heritage (Nemeth, 2015 p. 23). Russian government took an opportunity to chide the United States, having already done so after the looting of Iraq's National Museum in 2003. Ten years later, Russian news outlets ran reports quoting Iraq archaeologist and architect Ihsan Fathi, who claimed U.S. forces transferred billions of dollars' worth of looted cultural artifacts to America "without any paper trail." The Iraqi government tried to have them returned, he explained, but the "American administration wanted to strike a deal and return only half"

of the items. Fathi added that Polish troops had damaged Babylonian artifacts while occupying the area south of Baghdad ("US illegally obtained," 2013.)

Regardless of unreliability of the Russia media outlet and the veracity of the accusations themselves, the looting of the museum remained an easy way for hostile governments to undermine American military credibility in Iraq years after the looting of the museum and the destruction of the mosque.

Looted Antiquities in Conflict

Looting by Muslim extremists or Islamic terrorist-affiliated organizations has become more pronounced, or at least better documented in recent years. Najibullah Popal, once the Afghan curator for the National Museum in Kabul explained in a 1993 news article that looting of the prized museum started soon after the Communist government in Kabul surrendered power. Without the support from Soviet troops who withdrew in 1989, the newly installed regime promptly fell roughly three years later. "The problem [of looting] began," Popal said, "almost as soon as the Muslim guerilla groups captured the capital in April 1992 (Burns, 1996)." The civil war that ensued engulfed the museum and its contents.

The ransacking of the building proved to be more than random opportunism. Those experts involved in recapturing some of the stolen items explained that the "Islamic guerrillas...acted at the direction of an international network of middle-men, dealers and collectors" (Burns, 1996). The possible workings of shady antiquities networks connected to Afghanistan resurfaced again after the September 11th attacks when a German professor claimed that Mohamed Atta offered to sell Afghan antiquities two years before he would pilot the plane that crashed into Tower Two of the World Trade Center (Rothchild, 2008, p. 60).

The Taliban remained the primary culprit for the smuggling and brokering of looted Afghan antiquities. According to one observer, the Taliban focused primarily on

smuggling pre-Islamic antiquities out of country (Cultural Without Context, 2001, p.8). A separate June 2001 report suggested the Taliban had likely colluded with the Pakistani police to control the flow of antiquities from Afghanistan to traders in Peshawar, a major Pakistani city just over the border. There was also evidence to suggest the group offered “antiquities as collateral to sponsors [of their operations]” (Nemeth, 2015, p. 27). Other accounts appear to substantiate the Taliban’s role. According to leading British dealer of Pakistani and Afghan antiquities George Bristow, after the public display of destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, the Taliban promptly transferred pieces of the ancient statues to middle men positioned in the illicit antiquities network in Peshawar (Cultural Without Context, 2001, p.8). And a 2009 documentary found Taliban-looted masterpieces for sale in Belgium, “fresh with dirt from Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

Those foreign fighters occupying a divided Afghanistan also took opportunities to destroy. In March 2001, “non-Afghan squad[s] from Al Qaeda,” presumably some of the torchbearers of the Muslim guerilla groups present during the civil war, systematically ransacked the National Museum, destroying priceless antiquities under the banner of religious purification (Bohlen, 2002). Interestingly, the Taliban refused to participate in that particular instance of destruction.

Separately, many of the antiquities stolen during the looting of the Iraqi museums after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 remain unaccounted for. As of 2008, authorities have only recovered about 6,000 of the 15,000 items stolen (Emberling & Hanson, 2008, p.26). Some of the vases, cylinder seals and statuettes from the museum were later found in the possession of terrorists hiding in a bunker alongside automatic weapons, ammunition, black uniforms, and ski masks. In fact, Matthew Bogdanos (2005), who led the investigation into the looting of the museum, argues that evidence surfaced, pointing to organized criminal activity. But evidence of an organized network responsible for the transfer of illicit

antiquities had already been uncovered before the museum incident when Iraqi authorities stopped a smuggler with 3,000 different cultural artifacts months earlier. The smuggler confessed to making two or three such shipments a week (Johnston, 2005). The repeated exposure of these networks has led experts to fear Al-Qaeda offshoots like ISIS are today selling unaccounted for antiquities to fund their terrorist operations.

Islamic State and Antiquities

Currently, as Islamic State operatives make a public display of destroying antiquities, they peddle smaller pieces off camera to prospective buyers. This profitable enterprise has allegedly netted ISIS anywhere between several thousands of dollars to upwards of \$150 million a year since 2012 (Yoon, 2015; Pringle, 2014; Fanusie & Joffe, 2015; Swanson, 2015). The actual amount of proceeds remains a topic of fierce debate.

Nevertheless, plenty of evidence exists that implicates the Islamic State in the sale of illicit antiquities. In May 2015, a U.S. Special Forces operation targeting ISIS leader Abu Sayyaf yielded a cache of “hundreds of archaeological and historical objects and fragments,” among them coins, pottery and manuscripts, some of which was property of the Mosul Museum. State Department official explained how the raid revealed “systemic” financial operations, which included antiquities. The U.S. Special Forces found receipt, organizational charts, and digital usage for the ISIS’ “antiquities department” and evidence of transactions from a three month period that amounted to \$1.3 million (U.S. Department of State, ISIL Leader’s Loot; Brennan, 2015; Lehr & Davis, 2016).

Almost a year later, Kurdish fighters allegedly found “archaeological pieces” and an “old map in French” abandoned in a tunnel by ISIS militants after they fled during the liberation of Shaddadi, Syria. The same fighters also claimed to have found letters from IS fighters to Turkish border guards requesting they allow an antiquity dealer

into Syria to conduct unspecified business ("ISIS' Department of Artifacts," 2016). In a separate report nearly a year later, United Nations Russian envoy Vitaly Churkin claimed extremists smuggled cultural heritage through major Turkish cities like Gazinatep. Middlemen and Turkish transports companies then helped deliver artifacts to representatives from international crime groups who produce fake documentation on their origin (U.N. Security Council, 2016).

Earlier that year, counterterrorism officers tracked the ISIS organizers of the 2015 attack on Paris to Molenbeek in southern Brussels. Not only is the municipality known as a hotbed for extremists, it is also the hub for illegally trafficked antiquities. "Both Islamic State fighters and those fleeing them provide channels to bring stolen material directly to Brussels," Antiquities Coalition Chairman Deborah Lehr and Executive Director Tess Davis explain (2016).

ISIS digital footprint also confirms their activity in the illicit antiquities market. The group's "Kardashian approach" to publically destroying cultural heritage, as scholar Erin Thompson (2015) describes it, is followed by a similar use of social media for covertly hawking looted items. Illicit antiquities have appeared for sale on eBay, Facebook and Whatsapp. Scholar Amr Al Azm who tracks the sale of looted antiquities by posing as a potential buyer once received notice of an ancient Mesopotamian vase valued at nearly \$250,000 (Yoon, 2015).

It should be noted also that while ISIS takes a role in the process of looting antiquities, they by no means are the sole perpetrators. This fact complicates the issue. Indeed, the sudden ransacking of the Iraq National Museum suggested opportunism played a part. The incident proved that some of those locals who might cherish cultural heritage in peacetime might also resort to looting in times of need or lack of authority. The same can be inferred from evidence gained in Syria.

New data suggests groups or individuals not under Islamic State control are responsible

for some of the wide-spread looting that continues in the ongoing civil war. Through the analysis of "radically improved" high-resolution satellite imagery, scholar Jesse Casana (2015) has determined that the looting of heritage sites in Syria has occurred in areas under government and Kurdish control. The data reveals a startling fact: "it does not appear that looting is more widespread in ISIS-held areas [than others]." This conclusion does not absolve ISIS or other terrorist organizations from participation in the illicit antiquities market, but it does complicate a matter that many observers blamed primarily on the Islamic State and their associates (McGoogan, 2015).
Financial Impact

Terrorist organizations, and Islamic State most recently, remain a major threat to U.S. national security because of their financial prowess. As already mentioned, that network includes a very lucrative operation in the sale of looted antiquities, one that can touch American and European markets. Indeed, the estimated proceeds alone earned from antiquities could cover the costs of multiple terrorist operations. Putting the threat in dollars, experts estimate that an average Al Qaeda operation cost around \$30,000 to execute. For example: (1) The Al Qaeda-led bombings that destroyed the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania cost approximately \$50,000; (2) The USS Cole attack cost less than \$10,000. (3) The March 2004 Madrid train bombings cost an estimated \$10,000 (Cassara, 2006, p. 190).

If ISIS has, for example, made \$36 million off the antiquities trade since 2012, that profit alone could fund three attacks a day for an entire year. That figure, however, is more suited to the cost of attacks in close proximity to territories controlled by ISIS. An operation in the United States would obviously be more expensive. The 9-11 Commission Report estimated that the September 11th attacks cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000. That means a reasonable median estimate of aforementioned earnings (\$36 million) would give ISIS the funds necessary to

execute at least 72 attacks on par with September 11th (Grantham, 2015, p. 2).

From the beginning of the Afghan Civil War, priceless antiquities have found their way into U.S. and European markets. A 1996 New York Times article recounts how items moved across the border into Pakistan where middle men for international dealers awaited. At the Pearl Continental in Peshawar “antiquities experts from London, Hong Kong and Tokyo entertain[ed] one another with stories of being led into Peshawar’s bazaars,” and then on to “remote frontier villages, to view ancient Buddha heads and jeweled caskets,” some which sell for half a million dollars (Burns, 1996). Matthew Boganos calls this “...a modern-day version of the old ‘molasses to rum to slaves’ triangle trade.” Once made up of “pious New England ship captains,” the modern-day comparison to the triangle trade is now made up of a “cozy cabal of academics, dealers, and collectors who turn a blind eye to the illicit side of the trade...” (Bogdanos, 2005). A separate report from the Defense of Democracies echoes this point stating that “main buyers are, ironically, history enthusiasts and art aficionados in the United States and Europe – representatives of the Western societies which IS has pledged to destroy” (Fanusie & Joffe, 2015). Despite the history and connection to western markets, the government response remains tepid and focused on criminal elements.

Lack of Attention

The endemic lack of appreciation for how cultural heritage impacts policy extends into law enforcement as well. As former Executive Director of the World Bank and award-winning author Moisés Naím (2005) wrote that “to the extent...governments paid attention to illicit trade at all,” they have treated it as a criminal enterprise (p. 5). That scant attention is reflected in the resources dedicated to the problem. As of 2010, for instance, the Los Angeles Police Department remained the only American police force with a full-time art (and antiquities) crime investigator. And the FBI did not field a dedicated art and antiquities team until 2004, according to former FBI Robert

Wittman (2010, p. 19). The government answer to ISIS involved an FBI notification in August 2015 warning prospective buyers against the inadvertent purchase of ISIS antiquities circulating on the U.S. market (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015). The following month, the U.S. Department of State established the “Reward for Justice” program, which offers \$5 million for information that leads to a disruption in the ISIS antiquities trade (Howell, 2015). The involvement of both the criminal and diplomatic wings of the U.S. government illustrates how illicit antiquities straddle the fence between military and criminal enforcement.

The effort on the military side has historically proven to be causal and reactionary. The U.S. Government insists that although it has not ratified the Hague convention, its armed forces follow the spirit of the statute (Nemeth, 2015, p. 14). The Monuments Men model, made popular by the 2014 film of the same name, is used as popular proof of the military’s longstanding cultural heritage strategy. In it, a group of handpicked antiquities experts helped recover a variety of art and antiquities looted by the Nazis during their advance across Europe in World War II.

But pointing to the Monuments Men celebrates reactive policy rather than proactive strategy. The Nazis had seized a large quantity of cultural heritage prior to the founding of the group, suggesting the U.S. government and Department of Defense either did not anticipate their value to the enemy or deemed them inconsequential in the initial strategy. This select team of art experts led to the establishment of the small and underfunded Arts, Monuments and Archives (AMA) unit after the war. But this group has played a limited role in conflict ever since (Antiquities Coalition, 2016, p. 23-24). Coalition efforts during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom included, at times, investigative teams to protect antiquities. In the later stages of both campaigns, Special Agents from military agencies and analysts from relevant civilian law enforcement agencies

were detailed to Terror Threat Finance Cells to help shut down the movement of money. However, those efforts proved ad-hoc and reactive. The unpreparedness in defending the Iraq National Museum from looters after the invasion of Iraq in 2003 seemed to confirm that the reactive attention to cultural heritage remained largely unchanged.

The Reasons for a Lackluster Military Response

The military's overall institutional training in cultural heritage plagues strategy — although the Defense Department recently begun ramping up active duty education efforts through partnerships with the Smithsonian (Antiquities Coalition, 2016, p. 23-24). The lack of emphasis in cultural heritage during wartime likely stems from two different realities: (1) the decreased importance of plunder in military strategy; (2) criminal nature of illicit antiquities dissuades military from involvement.

First, the Pentagon's insufficient interest in protecting cultural heritage during war has much to do with the transition in armed conflict from the plundering of cultural heritage to the looting of it. As Erik Nemeth explains, plunder, or the seizure of cultural property by soldiers on the behalf of nations, was a common practice dating back to the times of Alexander the Great. And the 1954 Hague Convention was conceived partly as a negative response to its continued practice in World War II.

As the Cold War raged, state-sponsored plundering gave way to peacetime looting, which "developed into a threat of comparable magnitude" (Nemeth, 2015, p. 11). The transition from Cold War to post-Cold War era coincided with the "burgeoning art market," which further "tightened" the relationship between cultural heritage and security (Nemeth, 2015, p. 61). Ultimately, the growth in the antiquities market and political upheaval in the developing world provided opportunities for non-state actors to again use illicit distribution networks to sell looted antiquities.

Said another way, state-sponsored plundering has lost the strategic military value it once possessed. The creation of modern nations, borders and government has diminished the wealth advantage that acquiring booty once provided. Armies and governments no longer rely on plunder to expand their sphere of influence and finance operations. In short, modern warfare has left forces with less incentive to commandeer or steal a people's cultural heritage. "World War II marked a turning point in attitudes towards the spoils of war," Nemeth concludes (2015, p. 61). Less value in plunder presumably translated into less value in protecting it. The vacuum has thus been filled by other non-state organizations.

Secondly and somewhat connected to the first, the looting and illicit sale of antiquities have historically been categorized as a criminal matter, thereby, discouraging its inclusion in military doctrine. But terrorists' involvement in the illicit antiquities market and the twenty-first century War on Terror have combined to blur the lines between criminal jurisdiction and defense prerogatives. Although the U.S. government has by and large transitioned general terrorism from a criminal to a military matter, American officials have yet to fully define what behavior constitutes a law enforcement action and that which demands military intervention. Indeed, location of the behavior, rather than the act itself, often times remains the sole determining factor.

It can be argued then that a decrease in state-sponsored plundering during major conflicts since World War II alongside the simultaneous rise in criminal looting has together convinced defense officials that the looting and illegal sale of cultural heritage should not play a major role in military strategy. In other words, war planners conceivably discount it as a scheme of transnational criminals that warrants little or no military involvement. Rumsfeld's comments after the looting in Baghdad seem to confirm that mindset. The outdated model of past international treaties might further discourage increased attention. As Nemeth (2015) points out, the

risks from global terrorism and insurgencies potentially “antiquate the design” of past conventions (p. 22).

In any case, the transition from plundering to looting has merely redefined the role of cultural heritage in conflict. It has not diminished its influence. Indeed, the impact of looted cultural heritage on military operations, both from the reactions of a local population and the financial assistance for U.S. adversaries, is quite astounding when one reviews recent history.

Nevertheless, American law enforcement and military communities have more recently grown to appreciate cultural heritage and its impact on policy. But as interest grows and military planners find themselves facing enemies co-opting cultural heritage to further their agenda, new questions arise – primarily how looted antiquities can be treated as a military matter rather than purely criminal operation.

The Solutions

First and foremost, the Department of Defense needs to prioritize the protection of cultural heritage to guard against sectarian violence and to develop trust with a local community. The proactive protection of cultural heritage also helps counteract the illicit antiquities trade that partly funds terrorist organizations. A comprehensive plan for cultural heritage cannot be overlooked.

The process must involve predictive analysis, wherein experts in the field identify precise areas of concern – a similar process occurred before the Iraq War but advice went unheeded. Military strategy must deploy proactive protection of those sites it deems high-risk for looting or destruction. In particular, movable cultural heritage should take precedence over the protection of large sites or historical markers, although those areas should not be discounted altogether.

During conflict, the military must have operational capabilities to respond to actionable intelligence that indicates a given site is or may become under threat from looters. A response could include ground forces, airstrikes or varied types of military intervention. A doctrinal standard for future conflict must also include military experts dedicated to the protection of antiquities detailed to Terror Threat Finance Cells to help shut down the movement of money and help promote the protection of cultural heritage.

A long-term strategy should also involve the training and education of military personnel on the importance of cultural heritage and the impact of looting. Defense policy should also include clear military objectives for the interdiction of illicit antiquities networks within predetermined areas of military responsibility. The source must become a viable target of military operations.

Conclusion

“Despite the implications of the relationship between terrorist groups and antiquities,” Nemeth (2015) argues, “the demand for antiquities persists and consequently increases the market value of cultural artifacts from emerging nations” (p. 29). Since the participation in the illicit antiquities markets has been a hallmark of militant governments and terrorist organizations for years, the U.S. government could direct more military resources to this area.

Islamic terrorist organizations and their expansionist aims demand new defense strategies that prioritize the protection of cultural heritage and destruction of their financial networks. These groups remain a threat specifically because of their financial prowess and their occasional links to U.S. markets. Since money earned from the sale of antiquities directly finances the very organizations pitted against U.S. armed forces, all relevant military assets and legal procedures should be used as tools for interaction and preservation.

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