

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE ENGAGEMENT TEAM MISSIONS IN THEATRES OF OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN

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***Abstract:** The main topic is the theme of the missions carried out by the Female Engagement Team (FET) in the theater of operations in Afghanistan. The main pillars in this analysis are given by the cultural environment, the status of the Afghan women and gender differences, which will determine the impact and effectiveness of the FET. We will determine the degree of necessity and results achieved during the missions. Success is due to the positive impact it has on the population that helps to provide information and prevent conflicts based on tradition violations. The precise setting of FET tasks leads to the consolidation of local support, which will help achieve the final goal and solve problems and needs.*

***Keywords:** FET, Afghanistan, civil, cultural environment, women, gender differences, missions, population, information, traditions, transformation, religions, cultural, taliban, Islam, family, position of women in the family.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, society is undergoing a continuous, significant transformation process, that is increasingly present and influences human activities. This also affects the way in which military actions are carried out.

The main pillar of current missions is the civilian population, which influences the way the mission is carried out and the success at the same time. The success is influenced by the cooperation relationship and support offered by the civil sphere to the armed forces and vice versa, for this reason I chose the case study where I will analyze the military operations carried out in the theater of operation in Afghanistan, the focus being on the necessity and effectiveness of the FET teams. Through this case study I wanted to deepen and analyze the strategic environment and its evolution, the importance of understanding the cultural difference, the final goal being the success of the mission, thus analyzing the importance of the cultural factor and how it can be exploited through FET.

The security field has become more and more vast, which is why the degree of vulnerability is high and the attention given must be as high as possible. In this context, the armed forces have to become aware of the level of complexity and the need to use a new instrument, this being the introduction of FET teams in various fields and areas of security.

FET teams that consist only of female soldiers will be the main subject of this chapter. The International Security Assistance Forces ( ISAF ) has for the first time deployed FET teams to communicate with women in Afghanistan for intelligence processing purposes.

## **2. ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFICULTY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVILIAN-MILITARY AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE THEATER OF OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN FROM A CULTURAL POINT OF VIEW**

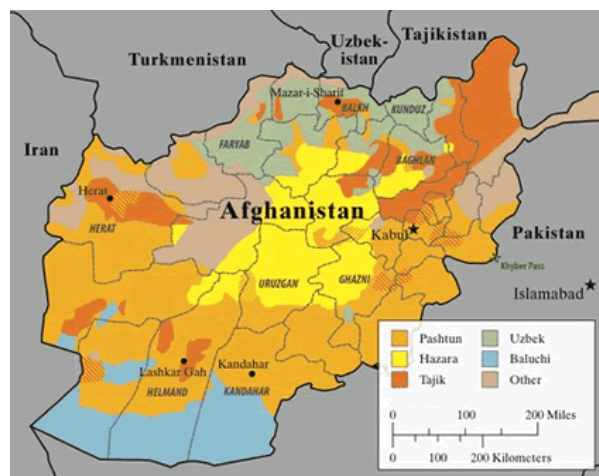
The values of a state are a component of culture, and culture is the defining element of a people. Therefore, these values that belong to the people are the elements that produce differentiation from other people. The loss of values leads to the blurring of culture. The members of a culture have to conform to the norms in order to exist and function in the culture.

Culture consists of behavior, habits, beliefs and other common characteristics that bind members of a group or society. With the help of culture, people in groups define and conform to common values and contribute to the formation of society.

In February 1977, the Great Assembly took place, where a new constitution was adopted. But the following year, it was repealed when another coup created the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, being governed by the Afghan Revolutionary Council. In the last coup in September 1979, a socialist government was installed.

After the fall of communism, Taliban leaders took over the power of the state by advocating the supremacy of Islamic law. With the help of the United States, in December 2001, the Taliban were removed from power, and a new constitution was ratified in January 2004, which would elect the president with two vice-presidents.

Islam is the official religion in Afghanistan and a large part of the population is Muslim (about 99% of the population). However, there are very small communities of other beliefs: Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and Bahai.



**FIG.1** Islamic Republic in Afghanistan

The population of Afghanistan is guided by strict values, beliefs and rules that provide for the family and behavior of members. However, these complex rules change depending on ethnicity and region. The family is an important institution in society.

The rules that guide the traditional family are shown in the following rows:

- Afghan families emphasize age and worship motherhood.
- Extended families serve a system of support, economic and social.
- The process of socializing the child occurs in the family.
- Extended family dwellings can contain three or even four generations, including the man who is considered the family pillar with his wife, his brothers, their sons and families, but also unmarried daughters and grandparents, if this can be done.

- The oldest woman in the house is responsible for establishing internal responsibilities.
- Women in the same household cooperate to educate and care for children.
- The man who has accumulated the greatest experience, usually the grandfather, controls all expenses.
- Even though family members work a lot, on weekends and sometimes during the week they organize visits and entertainment activities.
- The family of an Afghan is sacred. For this reason, it is considered a violation of manners if one man expresses any interest of in the female relatives of another
- Women are responsible for distribution of supplies obtained after a harvest and for them to reach the following year, this is usually dealt with by an elderly member of the family.
- The man can decide how women in the family must behave for the preservation of the male prestige and honor of the family.
- There is no possibility for a woman to be independent, otherwise the social situation of families may suffer if women do not remain subject and dependent on their husbands.
- Women are responsible for the prestige of the family

Historically, women in Afghanistan have always been marginalized, living together in subordinate relationships. The position of women in the family and society has been shaped over time by many factors, and there are cultural and historical roots aimed at the existence of gender discrimination.

### **3. ANALYSIS OF FET MISSIONS IN THE THEATER OF OPERATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN**

History has shown that most insurgents are men. But in traditional societies, women are influential when it comes to forming social networks that insurgents use for support. By gaining the trust of women through social and economic programs aimed at helping society, the power of insurgents is undermined. To achieve this, women in the armed forces are needed who contribute to the counterinsurgency effort.

To address 50% of the Afghan population, the FET concept was implemented by the United States Marine Corps ( USMC ), which tried to use a similar concept in missions in Iraq. The FET is a group of female soldiers who aim to build a connection with Afghan women, report information that can help combat insurgents and support them, and therefore get in touch with their families and community.

The Afghan conflict had a gender dimension, the insurgents understood this and used the Afghan sensitivity of honor to women. The Taliban have realized that American male soldiers avoid intervening inside homes to dishonor female women and used this to their advantage by storing improvised weapons and explosive devices in women's rooms. The Taliban also disguised themselves as women to smuggle weapons through checkpoints without being suspected. Women were used to transport arms, money and drugs.

Finally, it was concluded that FET groups can be engaged in other types of missions, not just in carrying out female population controls, these employed women have a responsibility to form relationships with Afghan families.

After receiving the agreement from the men to dialog with the women in the house, the female soldiers managed to get close to them and persuade them to speak.

They had discussions about daily life, their concerns, the environment, etc. The teams spent an average of an hour with Afghan families, during the discussion they received tea and bread, and instead offered medicine.



**FIG. 2** FET teams interacting with the local female population

The FET has been able to demonstrate its usefulness in the missions in Afghanistan. There are various reasons that demonstrate their need, such as the need to use female personnel in a visible way, the need to show that the military addresses gender issues, and the effectiveness demonstrated during the missions.

The possibility of interacting with Afghan women during patrols is inevitable, as they make up half of the country's population. FET teams are therefore a vital asset in the deployment of missions in Afghanistan.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

For starters, the civilian population feared how their traditions could be changed and how women could be influenced, later realizing the help they could receive. Over time, the effectiveness of the armed forces has been demonstrated with the implementation of the FET teams and how they influence the missions to success.

There are several important factors that improve the actions taken. Cultural environments are different and there is also a linguistic difference, to improve FET interventions a female translator or performer is required during the conversation. Eye contact is a very important element during a dialogue, for this reason the translator must be positioned behind or aside so as not to become the center of the conversation.

Credibility is a key factor, and to achieve this it is necessary to pay attention to any detail. In order to form a relationship with the Afghan family, FET must learn their habits to participate in their daily activities, gradually removing barriers to communication.

Another important aspect is the healthcare that can be provided by FET and can involve Afghan women in study activities. Health care is paramount, through the intervention of FET and a female doctor, Afghan women can be consulted. FET teams have to perform multiple tasks that help the population.

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