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Pershing Against the Moros:
A Paradigm for Successful Military Operations Other Than War

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

PERSHING AGAINST THE MOROS:

A PARADIGM FOR SUCCESSFUL MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR

It has become almost axiomatic that the future challenges to the U.S. military will fall largely into the category which joint doctrine labels Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Pershing's operations against the Moros in the Philippines from 1901 to 1903 span the range of MOOTW from humanitarian assistance to counterinsurgency. There is a timeless quality about the lessons which can be learned from this case study--particularly as an example of a successful application of the principles of MOOTW.

Of special interest are the lessons concerning the principles of restraint, perseverance and legitimacy. Pershing's enduring lesson in restraint is not about the battles he won at low cost, rather it is about the battles he avoided. His patient and dogged pursuit of making friends of the Moros using all the elements of power was particularly masterful. Finally, legitimacy, the glue that held the entire effort together, was carefully constructed by Pershing's personal contact, demonstrated fairness, and use of Moro self-interest to get them to "buy in" to American sovereignty.

Clearly, no two MOOTW scenarios will be exactly the same. Thus Pershing's solutions most likely cannot be co-opted *in toto*--there is no one size fits all here. However, this does not nullify the value of this case study. Pershing's successful subjugation of fanatical followers of Islam still has utility today and are well worth the study.

INTRODUCTION

In the pantheon of U.S. military operations there are few examples of such flawless execution as that achieved by Captain John J. Pershing during his campaigns against the Moros in the Philippines from 1901 to 1903. In particular, the study of Pershing's operations to subdue the Moros of the Lake Lanao region of Mindanao contain fertile ground for would be tillers of current Military Operations Other Than War (hereafter rendered as MOOTW) doctrine. Pershing's Lake Lanao operations are replete with examples of the successful application of the principles of MOOTW-- objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.¹

With the fall of the Soviet Union it has become almost axiomatic to assert that the future challenges to the U.S. military will fall largely into the category which joint doctrine labels MOOTW. Recent events in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia serve to underscore the truth of this notion. Given the high likelihood that the U.S. military will find itself dealing with future MOOTW scenarios, the study of MOOTW and its many manifestations is a useful endeavor. Pershing's operations against the Moros, from the American perspective, span the range of MOOTW from humanitarian assistance to counterinsurgency. Although Pershing's operations around Lake Lanao are almost a century old, they still are valuable examples of the principles of MOOTW in action and can provide future commanders with valuable insight into their application in MOOTW.

¹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (Joint Pub 3-07) (Washington, D.C.: June 16, 1995), II-1.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*General Situation*²

As a result of the Treaty of Paris of 1898 which formally ended the Spanish-American War, the United States found itself to be the *de facto* possessor of the Philippine Islands.³ The Filipinos, led by Emilio Aguinaldo, had helped the U.S. against the Spanish during the war. They felt betrayed when the U.S. failed to grant independence to the Philippines at the conclusion of the war. As a result, the Philippine Insurrection began on January 20, 1899. Some three years and 2,811 battles later, Aguinaldo was captured and the Philippine Insurrection, for the most part, was quelled.⁴

The end of the Philippine Insurrection, fought primarily on the island of Luzon, signaled the beginning of U.S. attempts to consolidate control over the other islands of the Philippine archipelago. Enter the Moros of the islands of Mindanao and Jolo. The Moros had for the most part successfully resisted almost 400 years of often draconian attempts by the Spanish to subjugate them.⁵ The Moros did not appear to be any more favorably disposed to American rule than they had been to Spanish rule. The American effort to establish control over the Moros in Lake Lanao began in earnest with Pershing's assignment to command at Iligan on November 1, 1902. It culminated on May 13, 1903 with his successful

² For a description of the Moros and the Americans see Appendix III: The Clash of Cultures.

³ R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 867.

⁴ Richard O'Connor, Black Jack Pershing (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 55.

⁵ C.C. Smith, "The Mindanao Moro," United States Cavalry Journal 17, (October 1906): 301.

circumnavigation of Lake Lanao--a feat which captured the imagination of Americans *and* Moros.

The March Around Lake Lanao⁶

At the start of Pershing's Lake Lanao campaign, the Americans, like the Spaniards before them, controlled only the coastal areas of Mindanao--control which essentially existed only where they stood.⁷ The interior was largely unknown and completely beyond American control. Pershing's operations in the Lake Lanao region were directed at establishing American control of the interior.

The seeds of success at Lake Lanao were sown at Iligan where Pershing took command on November 1, 1902. He immediately established strict discipline within his command to ensure that his own soldiers were prepared for action and, more importantly, to ensure that they would not antagonize the local population. Pershing also took great pains to learn about the Moros--their culture, beliefs, the Islamic religion and their language.⁸ He soon took to appearing at the market place so that he could interact with and learn about the visiting Moros and gain their trust. His major goal was to be invited to visit the Lake Lanao region. In time his persistence paid off and he was invited by the influential *Datto* (chieftan) Ahmai Manibalang of Madaya (north side of Lake Lanao). He accepted and traveled unarmed and

⁶ See map at Appendix I: Map of Lake Lanao.

⁷ O'Connor, 55.

⁸ Ibid., 54.

without escort (save a servant and an interpreter) into Moro country. Pershing had established a foothold.⁹

After Colonel Frank Baldwin's costly and precipitate attack on Pandanatan on May 2, 1902, Pershing was ordered to join Baldwin's command in southern Lake Lanao by General George W. Davis, the commander of the Military District of Mindanao and Jolo. Shortly thereafter Colonel Baldwin was removed and Pershing took command of a force of about 700 men at Camp Vicars on June 30, 1902. As the Moros became more aggressive and the Americans refrained from battle, it became clear to Pershing that he had to retaliate or risk losing face.

During the closing months of 1902, Pershing conducted successful attacks against the *rancherias* (district ruled by a sultan or *datto*) of Batig, Guaun and Maciu in the south and reaffirmed his friendship with the Moros in the north (Marahui/Badayan). Despite Pershing's successes on the battlefield, the Sultans of Bacolod and Taraca remained hostile. Reluctantly, Pershing decided to move against them on April 5, 1903. After repeated delays to provide the Moros the opportunity to surrender, Pershing reluctantly assaulted, capturing Bacolod on April 8. Subsequently, he moved north to Marahui once again, capturing the Calahui *cotta* (Moro fort) on the way.¹⁰ After conferring with Major Robert Bullard at Camp Pantar, Pershing returned by the same route to Camp Vicars closing on April 16.

⁹ Frank E. Vandiver, Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing, vol. 1 (Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 267-268.

¹⁰ Ibid., 282-302, 308.

On May 2, 1903, Pershing departed Camp Vicars once again to clear the eastern shore of Lake Lanao of hostile Moros. From May 3 to May 5, Pershing subdued Gata and Taraca--the former by a show of strength, the latter by assault. He moved north to Marahui and then continued on to Camp Vicars via the west side completing the circuit around Lake Lanao for the first time.¹¹

ANALYSIS

Objective

The principle of the objective is probably first among equals where the principles of war are concerned and is no less important in the principles of MOOTW. The traditional difficulty in a MOOTW scenario is in defining the military objectives which, by their fruition, will lead to the desired strategic aim. In essence, the linkage between strategic and operational objectives is the problem.

The American efforts against the Moros were blessed in three ways concerning the principle of the objective. First, the initial confusion concerning the political and military objectives in both Washington and in the Philippines had been clarified in the crucible of the Philippine Insurrection.¹² Without doubt, the strategic objective during the campaign against the Moros was to establish U.S. sovereignty throughout the Philippine Islands. The desired end state of the McKinley Administration (and later the Roosevelt Administration upon

¹¹ Donald Smythe, Guerrilla Warrior (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 102-105.

¹² Richard W. Mills, "The Philippine Insurrection: America's First Venture into Military Operations Other Than War," (Rhode Island: U.S. Naval War College, 1997), 4.

McKinley's assassination in the fall of 1901) was to return to full civil government with the military role dramatically reduced and security provided by a local constabulary force.¹³ At the operational level, the key objectives were to prevent anarchy and to establish American control throughout the islands. At the operational-tactical level, Pershing's objective on Mindanao was clearly (albeit tersely) stated by his boss, General Davis: "...Do everything possible to get in touch with the Moros of central Mindanao and make friends of them."¹⁴

The objectives above illustrate the second blessing which permitted the Americans to correctly adhere to the principle of the objective--there was a clear linkage between objectives from a national level down to Pershing at the operational-tactical level. The objectives at each level were clearly defined, and, as it proved, attainable. Pershing helped support national objectives by successfully getting the Moros to accept U.S. sovereignty. He clearly understood his role and how it fitted into the overall scheme.

The last of the blessings concerns the military and civilian leaders who successfully navigated the murky waters of methodology--the how of achieving the various objectives. A truly enlightened group of military leaders successively commanded the District of Mindanao and Jolo. General Davis and his successor, General Samuel Sumner, both shared Pershing's active interest in Moro affairs and his views on achieving control of the Moros, i.e., diplomacy first and force last. They never lost sight of the overall objective of making friends with the Moros. William Howard Taft, in his capacity as head of the Philippine Commission and later as Governor General of the Philippines, also demonstrated wisdom and strength in adhering to

¹³ Vandiver, 319-20.

¹⁴ Ibid., 263.

this policy that belied his bulk.¹⁵ Pershing proved to be exactly the right man for the job. His methodology was quite simple: make contact, gain acceptance and credibility, hold the Moro *dattos* responsible for the actions of their people, continuously reassure friendly Moros, use force with the most hostile Moros, minimize casualties throughout.

In retrospect, given the complexity of today's MOOTW scenarios, it appears that the theory of establishing "clearly defined, decisive and attainable objectives" in the Moro campaigns was both simple and obvious--in effect the Americans could not fail to get it right.¹⁶ In prospect, this was patently false. In trying to befriend the Moros, Pershing was faced with difficulties which made defining objectives (let alone achieving them) highly problematic. Pershing had to contend with a people and a territory about which he had little knowledge. He had to develop amorphous objectives that were targeted at obtaining knowledge about the Moros and their region and, above all, at winning their trust. In an era in which the concept of objective was synonymous with "taking the hill," this represented a particularly revolutionary departure from the conventional wisdom.

Another problem had to do with coming up with the correct sequencing of objectives which would ultimately lead to the end of anarchy and Moro acceptance of U.S. sovereignty. The path was by no means clear. Many officers simply started and ended with military force via punitive expeditions--their sole objective being to "civilize 'em with a krag."¹⁷ Pershing took a decidedly more enlightened approach, his key objectives were, in order, to establish

¹⁵ Ibid., 280, 262.

¹⁶ Joint Pub 3-07, II-1.

¹⁷ Krag refers to the Krag-Jorgensen rifles carried by the American soldiers. Vandiver, 274.

credibility, then to establish trust, to get the Moros to police themselves, and finally to quickly subdue those Moros who persisted in their hostility. These issues clearly indicate that Pershing exhibited an understanding of the principle of objective in this MOOTW scenario that was ahead of his times.

Unity of Effort

The essence of the principle of unity of effort is to achieve a harmonious melding of all the elements of national power. Today, achieving unity of effort is particularly complicated because of the vast increase in the number and diversity of "players" in MOOTW scenarios. Pershing's campaigns in the Lake Lanao region were by comparison simpler. The major elements of power were largely under his own control--namely his troops (military), his ability to pay handsomely for Moro goods (economic) and his freedom to negotiate (diplomacy).

Where Pershing stands out is in his ability to see that he could truly achieve unity of effort only by including friendly Moros as well as his own command. Pershing did not hesitate to organize friendly Moros and guide them towards actions that helped him to establish control on Lake Lanao. He began a program of giving friendly Moros American flags as gifts, encouraging them to display the flags on their *cottas* and when they came to visit. This identified them with the American effort and solidified their cooperation. Pershing went to great pains to articulate his intentions using letters, market speeches, and councils. His market appearances and councils were especially effective because they provided the Moros with forums to voice their concerns. The end result was that the Moros felt they had ownership in what Pershing was trying to accomplish. Thus the friendly Moros were efficiently directed toward actions that contributed to Pershing's ultimate objective of establishing U.S. sovereignty.

The principle of unity of command is worth mentioning here as it had an impact on unity of effort. When Pershing was assigned to Colonel Baldwin's command on the south side of Lake Lanao, he was placed in the peculiar position of having veto power over Colonel Baldwin concerning any actions taken against the Moros.¹⁸ Baldwin was extremely aggressive--his punitive attack at Pandapatan on May 2, 1902 almost unraveled all that Pershing had painstakingly achieved in the north. As a result, Pershing was assigned to Baldwin's command ostensibly to rein him in. This created some extremely difficult times for both men and certainly was not conducive to unity of effort. Ultimately, General Davis moved Baldwin to Malabang and put Pershing in charge of the effort in the south. Thereafter, with some prodigious juggling to keep officers more senior to Pershing away, Pershing was given complete autonomy.¹⁹

Security

The principle of security is all about maintaining friendly freedom of action and preventing the enemy from achieving his own. In MOOTW, this principle transcends simple force protection--it includes denying the enemy *any* positional advantage (military, political, economic or informational).²⁰ Pershing did a particularly good job of maintaining freedom of action. The key reasons for his success lay in sound tactics, thorough knowledge of the Moros, a demonstrated willingness and capability for self defense, and aggressive efforts to make friends with the Moros.

¹⁸ For background on this singular command relationship and Pershing's subsequent free hand in the Lake Lanao operations see Appendix II: Pershing's Remarkable Autonomy.

¹⁹ Smythe, 77-80, 87.

²⁰ Joint Pub 3-07, II-3.

A detailed description of Pershing's actual tactics in the field is of limited utility here as they are somewhat antiquated. However the characteristics of his tactics have a more timeless quality and warrant mention. Pershing's strict disciplinary standards were particularly unyielding on the point of security. In camp, on the march, and in the assault he never let up on security.²¹ In the attack, Pershing never sent a man where a bullet would suffice. His tactics incorporated and exploited the American advantages in firepower. In addition, he based his tactics upon a sound appreciation and knowledge of how the Moros would fight.²²

Although Pershing took every opportunity to let diplomacy work, he never hesitated to use force in self-defense. The Moros quickly learned that attacks on Americans would be vigorously countered. In the current vernacular, Pershing had a simple set of rules of engagement (ROE)--chief among them being defend yourself when attacked. True, recent scenarios are more complicated and require more detailed ROE. However, the teaching point Pershing provides is to make them as simple as possible and to NEVER hobble a soldier's right of self-defense.

The final point is the most important in a MOOTW scenario. Recruiting and assimilating the local populace significantly enhances security. Pershing continuously sought to befriend the various Moro *dattos*. This paid off handsomely because it helped to solve the manpower problem and it yielded critical intelligence concerning the more "recalcitrant"

²¹ To allow his sentries freedom to fire at anything save to their rear, Pershing ordered his officers to check on their sentries by moving from camp to outpost, back to camp and then out to the next outpost. One night an officer took the short cut, moving directly from one sentry to another, and was fired upon by the sentry. Pershing's response when he heard about it was "Well, it's a damn shame they didn't kill you!" Smythe, 86.

²² Vandiver, 281-282, 290-293.

dattos. The Americans simply did not have the manpower to be everywhere at once. Friendly Moros solved this problem in two ways--they provided the manpower to secure their *rancherias* and they did not need to be guarded against. Concerning intelligence, friendly Moros willingly provided guides and information as to which Moros were hostile and what they were up to. Both manpower and intelligence are perennial security issues in MOOTW. In effect, Pershing made a force multiplier out of friendly Moros--a concept that can be exploited to this day.

Restraint

Restraint has to do with the prudent application of force.²³ Pershing was without peer in this regard. To the aggressive Baldwin, Pershing counseled, "Forbearance could reduce the number of irreconcilables to a comparative few."²⁴ However, once force was deemed necessary, Pershing continually sought to use only the minimum amount of force required to achieve the objective with the paramount goal of minimizing casualties. He was interested in the effects of force not revenge.²⁵ What sets him apart was his desire to minimize casualties *on both sides*. After the capture of Bacolod, Pershing said, "We could have killed more, but what's the use?"²⁶ The tactics he developed to capture Moro *cottas* incorporated restraint--work the cottas at long range with artillery, give the Moros the opportunity to escape, and send

²³ Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

²⁴ Vandiver, 275.

²⁵ Smythe, 86.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

in the troops only as a last resort. Again, the intent was to convince the Moros of the futility of resistance, not to spill their blood.²⁷

The previous discussion of ROE under the principle of security was from the perspective of our own soldiers. In the context of the principle of restraint, ROE is more appropriately considered from the perspective of the local population and, for that matter, the American public and international community at large. In ordering Pershing to move against the Moros at Butig, General Sumner issued a succinct set of ROEs as follows: "Strictest orders will be given to control the fire of the men ... no property will be taken, damaged or destroyed outside of *cottas* captured in the execution of the above instructions."²⁸ The actions of Pershing and his troops indicate a strict adherence to these rules and paid big dividends in promoting the legitimacy of the American effort.

Perhaps there is no better testament to Pershing's successful application of the principle of restraint than to point out that Colonel Baldwin suffered more casualties in his one battle at Pandapatan (sixty men) than Pershing did in during the entire campaign around Lake Lanao (fewer than twenty men).²⁹

Perseverance

Pershing put the "measured" and "protracted" into the Joint Pub 3-07 definition of perseverance.³⁰ Pershing succeeded in Lake Lanao by approaching the overall objective

²⁷ Ibid., 88.

²⁸ Vandiver, 282.

²⁹ Smythe, 78.

³⁰ Joint Pub 3-07, II-4.

incrementally. Small steps--market place contacts; continuous and protracted contact via talks, letters, and visits to promote understanding; the purchase of Moro goods at slightly above market rates; incessant diplomatic overtures; resolute use of force sparingly applied--patiently and consistently applied ultimately won the day. During his brief service with Baldwin, Pershing continuously counseled patience to allow time to foster friendly relations by fair treatment and example. In his mind, moving too fast may force the hand of a potentially friendly Moro.³¹ Pershing never strayed from this philosophy.

In today's fast paced environment, this is perhaps one of the most difficult principles to adhere to. Our society is simply conditioned for instant gratification. As a result, fast resolution of conflict is expected. Pershing was fortunate in that his entire chain of command was willing to wait indefinitely as long as he was making progress in befriending the Moros. This allowed him to bring to bear diplomatic, economic, and informational measures (see above) that, over time, would reduce the need for military force. Pershing's actions demonstrate that the principle of perseverance, properly applied, can significantly reduce the amount of blood and treasure expended in MOOTW.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy entails convincing some target audience as to the rightness, legality or morality of a set of actions.³² It is about perceptions. Legitimacy is properly the confluence of all the other principles of MOOTW. Clear objectives, unity of effort, security, restraint, and

³¹ Smythe, 79-80.

³² Joint Pub 3-07, II-5.

perseverance all contribute to establishing legitimacy. As such, legitimacy is often the friendly center of gravity in MOOTW.

Pershing's every action was directed towards establishing legitimacy. This was a hard sell given that the U.S. had essentially annexed the Philippines via conquest. Additionally, the Moros had enjoyed a higher level of autonomy over the centuries than had their Filipino brethren. Failure to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the Moros was certain to result in protracted guerrilla warfare. In the end, Pershing managed to close the deal through personal contact, fair dealing, and by appealing to the Moros' self-interest.

Pershing's personal contact with the Moros has already been extensively chronicled. Two factors enabled Pershing to maximize the effect of his personal contact with the Moros. First, Pershing genuinely liked the Moros. During the innumerable hours of conferences this became apparent to the Moros. Secondly, and this sounds almost strange to modern ears, he treated the Moros as human beings.³³ Sadly, this was particularly unusual in Pershing's day. These two factors helped convince the Moros that he was genuine--Pershing could be trusted.³⁴

Over time, Pershing established a reputation amongst the Moros for fairness. He would not destroy a friendly *rancheria* for the actions of a few malcontents. However, Pershing did hold *dattos* responsible for the actions of their followers. When the *datto* could not control them, Pershing would have the *datto* arrested.³⁵ This had a decided affect on Moro compliance! Pershing made it clear that he had no quarrel with friendly Moros and always

³³ Smythe, 68.

³⁴ Ibid, 82.

³⁵ Vandiver, 280.

treated them well by respecting their property, their religion, and their local leaders. He was careful not to preach--adroitly circumventing the touchy issues of polygamy and slavery. Pershing opted to let time and education cure these ills. The fact that Pershing was made a *datto* by the Sultan of Bayan (the Moro on the receiving end of Colonel Baldwin's attack at Pandapatan a scant nine months prior) best illustrates just how strong a reputation for fairness he had among the Moros.

Pershing appealed to Moro self-interest in various ways. He made a strong case for the riches that could be had by engaging in commerce with Americans. To bring this home he made a point of purchasing supplies from friendly Moros, always paying slightly more than the market value. As he gained more converts (by the end of 1902 Pershing estimated that about two thirds of the Lake Lanao Moros were friendly), Pershing got friendly *dattos* to negotiate with hostile ones.³⁶ The tide began to turn against these holdouts and many came into the fold as a result of the efforts of the friendly *dattos*. Finally, it became abundantly clear to the Moros after the fall of Batig, Maciu, and Bacolod (among others) that, as the Borg of Star Trek fame say: "resistance is futile." They were simply no match for American firepower. In essence, there was no profit in resistance on a political, economic, or military level.

CONCLUSION

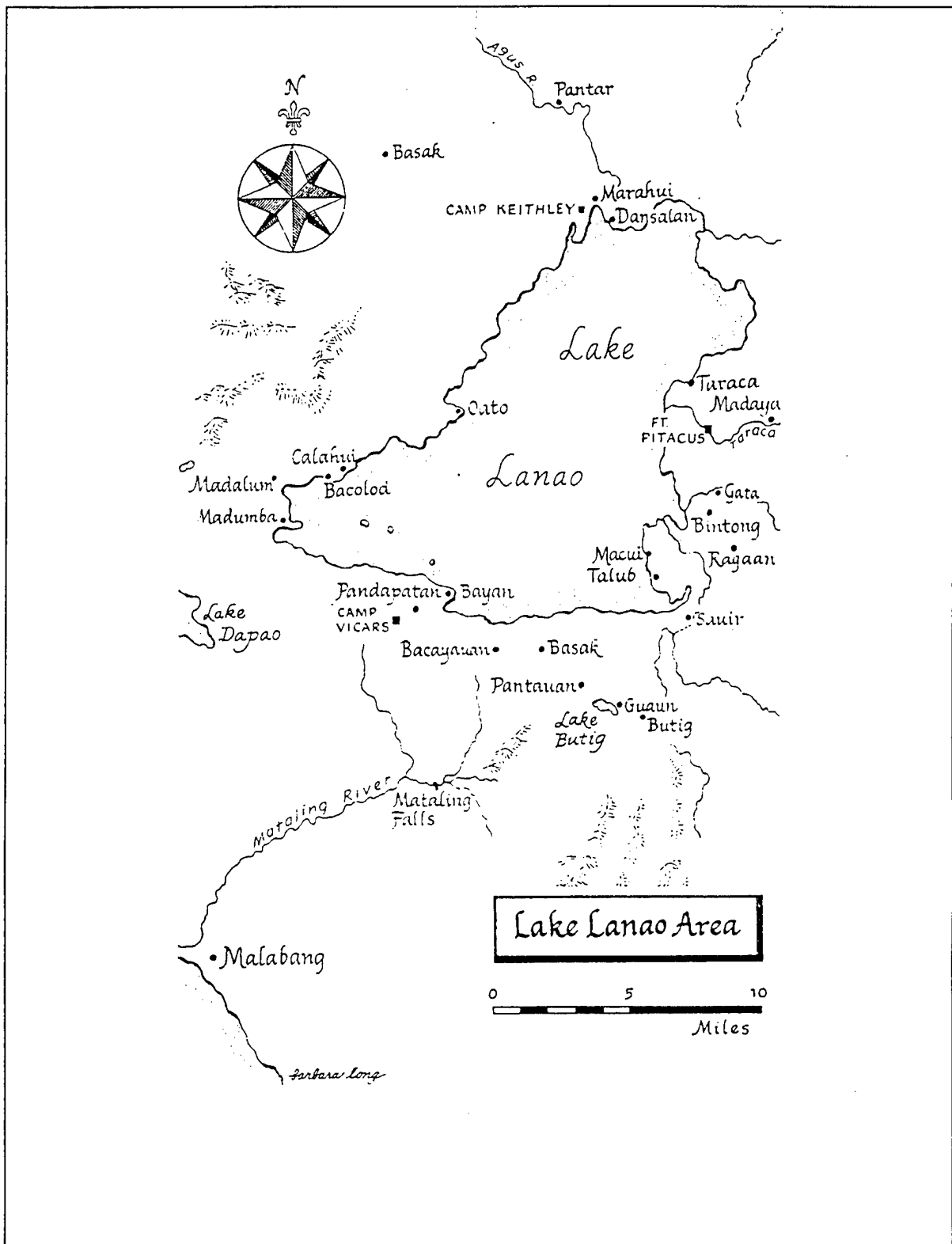
Pershing's Lake Lanao operations possess some timeless qualities that make it a useful historical case study--particularly as an example of a successful application of the principles of MOOTW. Pershing breathed life into these principles. Of special interest today are the

³⁶ Smythe, 91.

lessons concerning the principles of restraint, perseverance and legitimacy. Pershing's enduring lesson in restraint is not about the battles he won at low cost, rather it is about the battles he avoided. His patient and dogged pursuit of making friends of the Moros using all the elements of power was particularly masterful. Finally, legitimacy, the glue that held the entire effort together, was carefully constructed by Pershing's personal contact, demonstrated fairness, and use of Moro self-interest to get them to "buy in" to American sovereignty.

Clearly, no two MOOTW scenarios will be exactly the same. Thus Pershing's solutions most likely cannot be co-opted *in toto*--there is no one size fits all here. This does not nullify the value of this case study, however. Pershing's successful subjugation of fanatical followers of Islam still has utility today in light of our current difficulties with the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Certainly the current problem is more complicated, but Pershing's ability to gain the trust and respect of the Moros provides a starting point. For the reasons listed above, Pershing's campaign against the Moros has several lessons that have not lost their freshness nor applicability over the decades and are well worth the study.

APPENDIX I: Map of Lake Lanao³⁷



³⁷ Map taken from Vandiver, 289.

APPENDIX II: Pershing's Remarkable Autonomy

One of the more remarkable aspects of the Lake Lanao operations is the unusual autonomy which Pershing, a mere captain, enjoyed. Pershing's superiors went to great lengths to ensure that he had a free hand in dealing with the Moros. The unusual relationship between Pershing and Colonel Baldwin in which Pershing was given veto power over Baldwin is one example. General Davis' juggling of commanding officers to prevent an officer senior to Pershing from being assigned to Lake Lanao is another. These were not typical actions. Why was so junior an officer so carefully protected? The answer lies with Pershing himself. His past experience, personal qualities and ability to adapt to new situations, uniquely qualified him for his role at Lake Lanao.

Pershing's previous assignments helped prepare him to deal with the Moros. His service in the final campaigns against the Apaches and the Sioux from 1886 to 1891 and later against the Crees in 1895 gave him extensive experience in dealing with guerrilla warfare and with people of other races and cultures. During this period he commanded a company of Sioux Scouts and a company of the famed Buffalo Soldiers (Negro troops) of the 10th Cavalry.³⁸

Pershing possessed several qualities that set him apart from his contemporaries. General Davis, in his search for a commander for Camp Vicars, wanted a man with, "capacity for command, physical and mental vigor, infinite patience in dealing with ... fanatical semi-savages, wise discretion, a serious desire to accomplish the work set out for him, and

³⁸ Vandiver, 99, 137.

knowledge of the Moro character.”³⁹ He found these qualities in abundance in Pershing.

Missing from this list are some other qualities which characterized Pershing’s service with the Sioux Scouts, the Buffalo soldiers, and the Moros--genuine affinity, respect, and interest in these vastly different peoples. Pershing went to great pains to understand the different races and cultures he had to deal with. He learned to speak Apache and mastered the indian sign language of the plains.⁴⁰ He worked hard at learning to speak the Moro dialect throughout his tenure in Lake Lanao. His knowledge of the Moros was considered to be without peer amongst the Americans in the Philippines.

It is Pershing’s ability to develop unique solutions to different situations that most set him apart from his peers. In the Philippines, most officers did not adapt, preferring the policy of “civilizing them with a Krag” which they had learned in campaigns against the American Indians. The Philippine Insurrection was characterized by outright brutality and atrocities on the part of both sides. The words of Brigadier General Jacob “Roaring Jake” Smith capture the essence of the mindset among many U.S. officers: “... I want no prisoners, I want you to burn and kill; the more you burn and kill, the better it will please me.”⁴¹ Fortunately, cooler heads ultimately prevailed (Smith was later courtmartialled). Pershing was not afraid to use other means to achieve the desired end. He was an advocate of more humane methods targeted at winning native support and reducing as much as possible the military role.

³⁹ Ibid., 276.

⁴⁰ O’Connor, 31.

⁴¹ Robert B. Asprey, War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla In History, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 194.

Pershing's experiences, personal qualities, and adaptability, uniquely qualified him to deal with a fierce, implacable, and, to most Americans, an inscrutable foe. The senior leadership in the Philippines recognized that successfully dealing with this fierce and warlike people would require a different kind of officer and a different approach. To them, the officer who personified these characteristics was Captain John J. Pershing.

APPENDIX III: The Clash of Cultures

The Moros

It is interesting to note how little Americans knew of the Moros--particularly the Moros of the Lake Lanao region. Few foreigners had visited Lake Lanao--even fewer had returned.⁴² As a result, much of the U.S. Army's knowledge about the Moros was predicated upon rumor, fear and outright racism. Captain C.C. Smith, Fourteenth U.S. Cavalry, after two years service on Mindanao had this to say about the Moros:

"The Moro from our standpoint, has few, if any, traits that appeal to or excite admiration. He is a polygamist, has no moral sense, is tyrannical, vain, fond of show, and brutal in his treatment of those who acknowledge him as a superior. He is cool and treacherous, and for his religion commits the worst of crimes--murder--and with no compunction."⁴³

Many Moro characteristics lent themselves to this somewhat polarized view. Their belief that *juramentado*--a Moro who takes an oath before a *pandita* (Moro priest) to kill as many Christians as possible and then, with *kris* (Moro dagger) in hand, runs amuck killing all in his path until killed himself--as well as the belief that death in battle guaranteed immortal bliss in paradise served to fuel Moro ferocity and in turn made them a somewhat difficult bunch to cozy up to. Their practice of polygamy and slavery were also distasteful in Christian eyes.⁴⁴ Finally, the very remoteness and fierce individuality of the Lake Lanao Moros lent

⁴² "In 1597 the Spaniards sent an expedition to Lake Lanao. The Moro tradition of this invasion states that there were 400 Spaniards in armor and casques in this party and not one of them got back..." Smith, 301.

⁴³ Ibid, 287.

⁴⁴ Smythe, 161-164.

credence to other more fantastic assertions concerning the Moros. This remoteness also had an effect on the Moros themselves making them particularly suspicious of outsiders.

The Moros of the Lake Lanao region were fiercely independent owing fealty only to their local tribal chiefs (called *dattos* or *sultans* depending upon the scope of their territory) and *panditas*. It is important to note that Islam was central in defining the Moros who included many races but only one religion. Thus, no central Moro government existed. Their chief aims were maintaining independence, local rule by the *dattos*, and the freedom to practice their religion.

The Moros were disposed in various *rancherias* (district ruled by a sultan or *datto*) around Lake Lanao, each of which contained several *cottas* (Moro forts). Moro warriors were lightly armed some with a rifle or musket, most with spear, *campilan* (two-handed sword), and *kris*. *Cottas* contained some short range antique Spanish cannon called *lantacas*. The Moros were experts in "stealth and treachery"⁴⁵ and the ambush but did not shirk battle--in fact they sought it.

The Americans

Despite an extremely limited knowledge of the Moros and few precedents to follow, the Americans were blessed with a succession of intelligent and prudent leaders, both civilian and military, who preached restraint, dialogue, and, as a last resort, force in dealing with the Moros. Overly aggressive commanders were reined in and capable ones placed in their stead.

⁴⁵ Pershing rated the Moros as superior to the American Indian in stealth and trickery. Donald Smythe, "Pershing and Counterinsurgency," Military Review 46, (September 1966): 86.

Herculean efforts were made to ensure that the very junior Captain Pershing was not outranked in the Lake Lanao region. This led to a chain of command that was of one mind in regard to how the Moro problem should be addressed.⁴⁶ Much had been learned in the Philippine Insurrection.

Pershing's troops (regulars) possessed vastly superior firepower. Armed with Krag-Jorgensen rifles, 2.9 inch howitzers, and mortars, the Americans enjoyed a tremendous stand-off advantage which Pershing incorporated into his tactics. The down side of all this firepower was the logistics of supporting and moving such cumbersome equipment in a very austere environment. A standard pattern emerged for investing *cottas*: establish a cordon around the *cotta* (often leaving the Moros an out), unlimber the guns and bombard the cotta, and finally assault with infantry. The intent was to maximize the American advantages of firepower and range and to minimize casualties.

⁴⁶ Vandiver, 263-264.

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