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14. ABSTRACT

Hard lessons learned in both Iraq and Afghanistan appear to indicate that technology, intelligence, and training cannot prevail if Americans do not understand their adversaries and/or the people they are trying to protect. As a result, an undue focus has been placed on the need to understand foreign cultures within the context of conducting military operations. While this knowledge is important, an understanding of another culture can only be reached through first understanding American culture and the subsequent inherent biases. One's own culture is what forms the lens through which others are perceived. This paper will provide an understanding of what constitutes "culture" and will examine how the United States (U.S.) military currently conducts cultural orientation training. It will then explain some aspects of American culture that provide the basis for a worldview, which must be considered in the attempt to understand others. Finally, the paper will provide an examination of how culture has affected U.S. military goals and activities in previous operations, illustrating how blindness to one's own culture can potentially lead to failure.

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CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: IS IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN ANOTHER
CULTURE WITHOUT A FIRM GRASP OF ONE'S OWN?

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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6 May 2010

Contents

Abstract

Hard lessons learned in both Iraq and Afghanistan appear to indicate that technology, intelligence, and training cannot prevail if Americans do not understand their adversaries and/or the people they are trying to protect. As a result, an undue focus has been placed on the need to understand foreign cultures within the context of conducting military operations. While this knowledge is important, an understanding of another culture can only be reached through first understanding American culture and the subsequent inherent biases. One's own culture is what forms the lens through which others are perceived. This paper will provide an understanding of what constitutes "culture" and will examine how the United States (U.S.) military currently conducts cultural orientation training. It will then explain some aspects of American culture that provide the basis for a worldview, which must be considered in the attempt to understand others. Finally, the paper will provide an examination of how culture has affected U.S. military goals and activities in previous operations, illustrating how blindness to one's own culture can potentially lead to failure.

So it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you can win a hundred battles without a single loss.
If you only know yourself, but not your opponent, you may win or may lose.
If you know neither yourself nor your enemy, you will always endanger yourself.
                                                                    – Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

There has been a significant push in the United States (U.S.) military in recent years toward training related to cultural awareness and foreign language acquisition. Specifically, cultural awareness seems to be one of the fundamental concepts highlighted in attempting to calculate how to conduct successful military operations. Despite this push, the overall concept is not new, as all four military services operate centers specifically designed to provide cultural awareness training to their respective service members. The U.S. military seems to be searching for better ways to *teach culture* in anticipation of current and future operations; however, a true understanding will only be possible by incorporating lessons regarding American culture.[1]

The question that always plagues the U.S. military is how to determine where the next conflict is going to occur. Colonel Maxie McFarland (USA, Ret) stated it well when he asked, "With so many diverse cultures and the enormous amount of study required to become an expert on any given one, how do we narrow the field to find the right focus for generating cultural skills in soldiers?"[2] While intelligence analysts have struggled with this question in the past, the best answer may lie with the method of teaching American culture in order to make the process of learning other cultures easier and less time consuming when conflict does arise. Cultural norms are so ingrained in daily life that many individuals are completely unaware of how this affects their daily behavior. Developing an awareness of culture may be the single most important aspect of this area of study within the U.S. military. By comparing and contrasting American norms and values with those of other cultures, awareness can be developed regarding how to better formulate military plans from Phase 0 through Phase 5.

It is important to understand the basic concept of culture. Understanding another's culture is not simply learning what taboos to avoid or what historical events shaped the current environment, but rather it is an in-depth understanding of the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular group as it compares to individually held values. Simply put, it is the ability to view the world through a lens that distinguishes the differences of how others see the world.

In developing this concept, information will be provided to define culture and its component parts. Furthermore, an overview of cultural orientation and its relationship to intercultural communication will be examined. A look into current U.S. military culture training will help to form the foundation behind this concept and will highlight the relevance behind the need to shift how culture training is accomplished. Using this data, two different operational examples will be considered in order to demonstrate how a better understanding of American culture could have potentially affected the outcome in a more positive fashion. Finally, recommendations for how the U.S. military should move forward by incorporating this concept will be presented.

Culture Defined

In order to understand the significance of culture as it relates to military operations, it is important to define the general concept. Although finding a definition for culture should be straightforward, there are a variety of nuances that make it difficult to find a common, all-encompassing description. These subtle variations are due to the use of the concept across various fields of study and have continued to evolve over time. As an example, Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn identified 164 different definitions of the term culture in their 1952 book on the subject.[3] Dictionary definitions often incorporate various elements such as

geography, history, language, religion, and shared beliefs in order to define culture; however, the fundamental basics all focus on framing a societal characteristic. This paper will utilize the definition provided by Dr. Brooks Peterson, a noted expert in the cross-cultural arena and founder of Across Cultures, Inc.:

> Culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries or regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on the people's outward behaviors and environment.[4]

Essentially, culture is the framework by which we view the world around us. This learned and shared behavior explains how human beings interact within a community, no matter how large or small.[5] Culture also impacts how an individual will act or react to new situations or information as they view it in the context of what they already know.

Defining the concept of culture as it relates to military operations is more difficult than arriving at a comprehensive definition.[6] According to a review of different military documents to include doctrine, operating manuals, regulations, and instructions, culture is mentioned on numerous occasions although it is often not further defined.[7] For example, Joint Publication (JP) 2-0 *Joint Intelligence* and JP 3-0 *Joint Operations* both mention the importance of gaining cultural knowledge of the operating environment, but the documents do not elaborate as to what specific knowledge is to be gained or the method by which this should happen.[8] Furthermore, the official definition of culture as listed in the JP 1-02 *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* is as follows:

> A feature of the terrain that has been constructed by man. Included are such items as roads, buildings, and canals; boundary lines; and, in a broad sense, all names and legends on a map.[9]

Clearly there is a disconnect between the military definition of culture and its intended application toward achieving success during military operations.

Current U.S. Military Culture Training

As previously mentioned, all branches of the U.S. military operate schools dedicated to culture and/or language training. [10] Using the U.S. Army as an example, deployment preparations have included language, political, and cultural instruction for every conflict since World War II.[11] Despite the fact that cultural training is not new, its importance seems to have increased as military and political leaders search for better solutions in today's operations. This rise in importance could be attributed to the ongoing counterinsurgency operations that place a much heavier dependence on winning the hearts and minds of the local population in order to further military successes gained on the battlefield.

All too often, culture training includes only a series of overly simplistic *do's and don'ts* regarding proper behavior at the forward location. The training is oftentimes only conducted as a part of predeployment preparations and can range from self-paced computer based training modules to full-fledged interactive seminars. While these cultural aspects are important to the conduct of day-to-day business, they certainly do not provide the U.S. military member with the tools they need to properly understand the culture for which they are about to operate. Furthermore, the limited focus of the military's cultural training can be confused with sensitivity or diversity training because it does not provide the military member with enough cultural information to identify and cross the cultural gap.[12]

It can be argued that the current U.S. military training on culture is short sighted and is generally focused only on the current conflict. Although there has been movement toward incorporating a longer-term focus on training in languages and culture, the movement has not

yet been fully realized. High-ranking military and congressional leaders have begun to

advocate for this type of training; however, the current reality does not provide military

members with the tools they need to be considered culturally savvy.

A New Method

A significant number of articles have been published over the past decade discussing

the critical need to "overhaul the mentality of the military" [13] by "integrating cultural

sensitivity into combat operations"[14] in order to be operationally successful. Every article

states the only way to incorporate this type of training is to build a foundation through

professional military training and doctrine by which cultural awareness becomes second

nature, yet limited information is provided regarding how to conduct this task.[15] Proposals

generally include a training focus centered on basic aspects of a culture such as geography,

history, politics, religion, and customs.[16] While this will aid military members by providing

a deeper knowledge of the area and/or conflict for which they are about to conduct

operations, the data will not create a true understanding of how culture impacts actions and

attitudes in the region. In order to develop an understanding of a given culture, the training

must move away from the information found in most standard intelligence briefings.

As an outspoken proponent of cultural training in the military, General Anthony Zinni

(USMC, Ret) has stated, "Know the culture and the issues…know how the involved parties

think. We cannot impose our cultural values on people with their own culture."[17] This goes

to the heart of why it is important to study all aspects of a culture before commencing

operations. However, his statement also highlights a fundamental flaw in the current cultural

training process within the military. General Zinni recognizes that we cannot impose our

culture on that of another, but he also assumes that U.S. military members are able to

recognize their own culture and the inevitable biases associated with being an American.

This concept, known as ethnocentrism, is the habit of interpreting life from only the point of view of one's own group.[18]

A new method for conducting cultural training does not radically shift from the current structure, but tackles the problem from a different angle. In order to truly understand another culture, it is paramount that an individual know of his or her own culture first. On the surface, this feat may seem overwhelming, as America is a very large and diverse nation; however, there are fundamental basics involved in understanding culture that transcend across all nations and groups.[19] This concept is not new, but rather has been employed by the business world as guided by sociologists, social psychologists, and anthropologists for decades. Experts in these fields have not necessarily agreed upon the correct methodology to teach culture, but they all agree that culture has a direct impact on the ways that individuals communicate. By understanding the interpretation of how a situation is perceived through one's own cultural lens, steps can be taken to ensure the correct message is being transmitted. Of course, this knowledge will only go so far without also understanding the cultural lens by which the information is being received. Consequently, it is not possible to have one without the other.

<div align="center">Cultural Orientation</div>

In order to develop an understanding of cultural orientation, it is important to understand many of the foundational normative values and factors. Research has identified several different factors regarding how a culture operates which help to define different cognitive styles, theories of knowledge, and value systems.[20] While not all encompassing,

these norms can provide a frame of reference through which a common understanding can be developed.

Looking at different cognitive styles will help to understand how information is organized and processed within a given culture. People within a society generally fall into either an *open-minded* or *closed-minded* cognitive style.[21] A person from an open-minded society will generally seek out additional information before making a decision, whereas an individual from a close-minded society sees only a narrow range of data and will ignore any other information provided. Using this example, many Middle Eastern theocratic countries are considered to be closed-minded societies as they are guided only by ideas presented within the Koran. Other societies that fall into the closed-minded category include communist nations and tradition-based societies in the Far East. However, it is interesting to note that the United States is also considered to be a closed-minded society, opening only to outside information when a significant deficiency is recognized. While the United States is not theocratic, communist, or guided by thousands of years of history, the cognitive style may be due in part to the fact that Americans believe their society and culture are superior to others, and therefore, will not consider the idea that other's ways might be better. This concept, known as American exceptionalism, traces its roots back to 1630 when John Winthrop wrote, "We shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us."[22] It was expected that the colonists in the new world would be the example for the rest of Europe to emulate. Former American presidents throughout the past few decades have echoed the same concept, which argues that the United States has special standing amongst all nations.

Another aspect of cultural cognitive style includes a study of how people process information. This process is often divided into two categories, with characteristics being

either associative or abstractive.[23] An associative person will filter new information through the screen of previous personal experience in order to determine how to respond, whereas an abstractive person will consider hypothetical situations without requiring the use of past experiences as a guide. While individuals may not necessarily conform to the societal ways of thinking, associative or abstractive thinking is often developed through the educational system. Using the same compare and contrast system above, most Middle Eastern countries produce associative thinkers whereas America values abstractive problem-solving behavior.[24]

The final aspect in determining cognitive style has to do with how thinking and behavior are focused; people are considered to be either particular or universal thinkers.[25] Particular thinkers value personal relationships over rules and laws when interpreting a given situation, while universal thinkers tend to obey rules and laws with relationships taking a secondary importance. Universal thinkers often look at *what is best for society* and believe it is their overall duty to comply with authority in general.[26]

Understanding the belief system by which a culture operates can help to navigate through the decision making process. This concept, known as epistemology, determines how a specific culture arrives at the truth. Different cultures determine the accuracy of knowledge using faith, facts or feelings.[27] The United States values facts when seeking the truth and only occasionally lets faith, whether religious, political or ideological, interfere in the process. On the contrary, when doing business in the Middle East or Far East, it is faith and feelings respectively that determines how a country arrives at the truth.

While definitely not the final norm in determining cultural orientation, understanding the value system, or the basis for behavior, within a society will provide significant insight into how ideas are determined to be right or wrong. One of the most relevant items to

consider in this determination is a culture's locus of decision-making, or how much they prize individualism as opposed to collectivism.[28] Americans are very individualistic in this sense with personal initiatives and achievements being rewarded positively. This value system embraces the idea of decentralized decision-making, with important decisions frequently delegated to the lowest level. By comparison, the cultures in both Central and South America tend toward collectivism where a strong sense of responsibility to the family or group will influence how a decision is made. This same collectivist nature places strong value on holding the decision-making responsibility, therefore delegation is not often seen or appreciated. Along these same lines, American culture tends toward the concept of the majority rules, whereas decision-making in the Far East strives toward consensus.[29]

Additional areas of study to look at when determining cultural orientation include communication, attitudes toward conflict, approaches to completing tasks and the value of time. When focusing on communication, it is more important to dedicate time toward understanding the style of communication rather than learning a few words for basic communication. Determining how a culture generates, transmits, receives, and interprets messages can go a long way toward effective communication in a foreign nation. While symbolic communication such as the use of pictures, drawings and photographs can further understanding between members of different cultures, it is also paramount to have knowledge of the degree of importance given to nonverbal communication. Simple aspects such as facial expressions, personal distance, and the sense of time can make an enormous difference when dealing with a culture that places additional value on such actions and ideas. Furthermore, different norms regarding the degree of assertiveness can add to cultural misunderstandings when attempting to communicate.[30] Knowing whether a culture views

conflict as positive or negative, or something that should be faced in public or discussed in private, will aid in developing a better understanding of how a society operates.

Finally, it is imperative that culture training includes many of the characteristics already being covered. Knowing the history, religious background and tribal/national affiliations of a culture will often provide insight into many of the other aspects already mentioned above. Just as with the other aspects of cultural orientation, grasping how these factors influence American culture is required in order to understand another culture.

Impact

Globalization and today's 24-hour news cycle have created an environment where a subtle mistake made by a junior military member at the tactical-level can be broadcast around the world with little warning. This concept, known as the strategic corporal theory, can destroy months of progress and directly impact the strategic-level.[31] In order to combat these situations, leaders at every level need to understand the role that culture plays within military operations. While it may not be possible to negate every potential mistake made by a junior member, cultural understanding will go a long way toward preventing avoidable pitfalls. With that said, this understanding will serve as a significant force multiplier at the operational-level giving leaders the tools they need to rapidly judge a situation for its reality, and not through the culturally-biased lens of someone less informed.

American culture is something that is lived every day by U.S. military members, but it is probably not well understood. An ironic circumstance is that other cultures are probably more likely to recognize nuances within American culture as a result of their ability to view it from the outside. Although the current viewpoint stems from the idea that culture belongs to free enterprise and does not have a role in government, this has not always been the case. In

1938, the U.S. State Department established the Division for Cultural Relations as a way to use culture as a diplomatic tool.[32] During the Cold War, American diplomats felt as if they needed to export the American way of life abroad as a way to combat communism. Despite the lack of government involvement in the spread of American culture abroad today, the prominence of American entertainment, technology and economic influence continues to further international perception of "American cultural imperialism."[33] In order to understand this perception and its influence on U.S. military operations abroad, it is important to understand the influences of American culture as well as its reception by non-Americans.

<div align="center">Operational Examples</div>

One prominent view of United States culture abroad is that Americans are arrogant, imposing, and unable or unwilling to respect local customs or culture.[34] Unfortunately, perception becomes reality when Americans interact in international situations without first understanding their own cultural predisposition. A comparison of American cultural norms with those of other cultures is found in Figure 1. While there are a wide variety of military situations that could have yielded better outcomes with a thorough understanding of American

Comparing Cultural Norms and Values

Aspects of Culture	Mainstream American Culture	Other Cultures
Sense of self and space	Informal, handshake	Formal hugs, bows, handshakes
Communication and language	Explicit, direct communication; emphasis on content, meaning found in words	Implicit, indirect communication; emphasis on context, meaning found around words
Dress and appearance	"Dress for success" ideal; wide range in accepted dress	Dress seen as a sign of position, wealth and prestige; religious rules
Food and eating habits	Eating as a necessity, fast food	Dining as a social experience; religious rules
Time and time consciousness	Linear and exact time consciousness; value on promptness, time equals money	Elastic and relative time consciousness; time spent on enjoyment of relationships
Relationships, family, friends	Focus on nuclear family; responsibility for self; value on youth; age seen as handicap	Focus on extended family; loyalty and responsibility to family; age given status and respect
Values and norms	Individual orientation; independence; preference for direct confrontation of conflict	Group orientation; conformity, preference for harmony
Beliefs and attitudes	Egalitarian; challenging of authority; individuals control their destiny; gender equality	Hierarchical; respect for authority and social order; individuals accept their destiny; different roles for men / women
Mental processes and learning style	Linear, logical, sequential problem solving focus	Lateral, holistic simultaneous; accepting of life's difficulties
Work habits and practices	Emphasis on task; reward based on individual achievement; work has intrinsic value	Emphasis on relationships; rewards based on seniority, relationships; work is a necessity of life

Figure 1. Comparing Cultural Norms and Values (Gardenswartz and Rowe 1998, 164-165).

culture, the two operations of Somalia and Iraq will be used to examine the theory in more detail.

<div align="center">Somalia</div>

The United States became involved in Somalia under a United Nations (UN) mandate for humanitarian disaster relief and in conjunction with the collapse of civil government. Although American intervention was initially welcomed, public sentiment changed during the course of the operations, violence increased in the country, and U.S. forces were subsequently withdrawn after only 18 months without successfully achieving the objectives. Although the Somali and American cultures share many common values, such as independence, democracy, individualism, and egalitarianism, the United States was at a disadvantage due to a lack of cultural understanding.[35] This lack of understanding applied to the limited knowledge of Somali culture as well as toward how American cultural norms would impact the situation as a whole. While the United States had good intentions when they embarked upon the humanitarian operations in 1992, a better understanding of culture could have led to a better outcome.

In looking at the concept of communication, cultural misunderstandings can be noted in several different areas. Somalis believe in the notion of *collective responsibility* where a "council of men" make decisions, and matters such as age, lineage and wealth can heavily influence decision-making. This concept directly contradicts the American cultural aspiration for individualism. By not understanding this difference, the U.S. military concentrated its attention on two of Somalia's main warlords believing they were operating as individuals and not as part of a larger integrated society. As a result of this lack of understanding, the degree of power and authority was shifted within the Somali kinship

system.[36] Another area related to communication includes the methods by which the U.S. military attempted to spread their message. Although communication is important within the Somali culture, a large portion of the population is illiterate and relies on the spread of the spoken word for messages. Rather than embracing the Somali oral tradition whereby the more eloquent spoken word receives the most attention, the U.S. military opted to drop leaflets. By taking these actions, the United States not only did not understand the Somali desire for verbal communication, but also failed to appreciate the collective nature of now information is transmitted and received. Furthermore, the image of American helicopters dropping items on the Somali people provided the various warring clans' propaganda material.

Along these same lines, the U.S. military failed to note the differences between approaches to problem solving and the importance of time. The United States fundamentally believed that the humanitarian actions in Somalia were going to be brief and there would be no need to become involved in local politics.[37] Unfortunately, this concept was the direct result of traditional American abstractive and universal thinking and did not take into consideration the Somali tradition of associative behavior. In this situation, cultural misconceptions allowed the Somali "nomadic" concept of time to be ignored in favor of the time-constrained negotiations, subsequently increasing tension in the region.

Despite the fact that American and Somali cultures share the common value of being closed-minded, the attitudes toward reconciliation differ greatly. The United States and Somalia have opposing values when is comes to conflict resolution. Somalis value their own ability to resolve problems independently without outside intervention, whereas the United States believes that the involvement of outside assistance is often best.[38] Where a Somali

would see a third party as untrustworthy, the United States views an outside opinion as a guarantee of impartiality. In the Somali environment, local tradition and family culture is valued as the way to resolve issues. In contrast, the United States eagerly accepts outside information and techniques when a deficiency is recognized.

The lack of cultural understanding also impacted the U.S. military's ability to operate as a coalition in this operation as many different organizations were all operating with different biases. The media frequently portrayed America as the only country willing or able to help in the Somali humanitarian cause, which "resulted in self-congratulatory commentary reminiscent of the Gulf War."[39] While the United States did not see this fact as unacceptable or out of the ordinary, the impact of such behavior alienated coalition partners, undermined UN involvement and made further coordination extremely difficult. In this regard, the United States completely disregarded any assistance by other African nations believing that their help was not necessary and completely ignored the fact that African nations believe they should be the first to intervene in African problems.

<center>Iraq</center>

U.S. military involvement during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM presents many more examples of cultural misunderstandings. While the United States has made a tremendous shift in the value placed on Iraqi cultural knowledge since 2003, having a greater understanding of American culture would have provided a significant advantage to planners at the outset of operations.

In a situation similar to that of Somalia, the United States believed that their actions would be welcomed and encouraged by the local populace.[40] This belief likely stemmed from the American ethnocentristic belief that its values and way of life are superior to all

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others. Similarly, the United States believed that the Iraqi people would join together to "form a more perfect union" if the umbrella of a harsh dictator were lifted. While this notion seemed plausible to most Americans, the belief is directly impacted by cultural biases. American culture has been significantly influenced by a unique nationalism not found elsewhere in the world. As immigrants arrived in the United States, they traded their cultural norms (language, traditional beliefs, etc.) for American patriotism, thereby building a strong system of shared core beliefs. U.S. military planners allowed this bias to interfere with appropriate planning, not understanding that Iraqi culture is more strongly associated with extended family, tribes or groups and not necessarily with the state or nation. See Figure 2 for a hierarchical list of the cultural Scale of Identities.[41] Furthermore, challenges to planning also included the fact that American culture embraces individualism whereas the Iraqi culture is much more collectivist in nature.
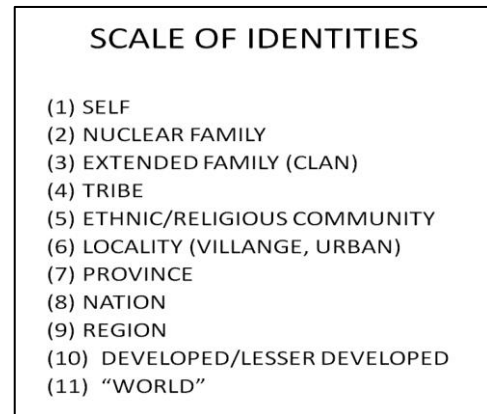
SCALE OF IDENTITIES

(1) SELF
(2) NUCLEAR FAMILY
(3) EXTENDED FAMILY (CLAN)
(4) TRIBE
(5) ETHNIC/RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY
(6) LOCALITY (VILLANGE, URBAN)
(7) PROVINCE
(8) NATION
(9) REGION
(10) DEVELOPED/LESSER DEVELOPED
(11) "WORLD"

Figure 2. Scale of Identities (Bechtold 2009).

Another critical point to be considered is the notion that the Iraqi people would stand-up and take ownership of their nation as soon as possible. Again, the American cultural bias of governmental representation altered the military way ahead. The United States was founded on the principle of a representative form of government where society expects that the elected officials be accountable to the people. Given that Iraq was a *rentier* state, the government derived the majority of its income from the export of natural resources and not through taxation.[42] As a result, the people came not to expect much from their government nor believe that they had a say in the matter. Moreover, grass roots organizations are not

common in Iraq; therefore, motivating the local populace to stand up for their beliefs in ways similar to the current Tea Party movement in the United States did not come naturally.[43]

Notwithstanding the information presented above, many would disagree with the notion that teaching American culture to U.S. military members would increase effectiveness. One of the main counterarguments to the idea of teaching American culture is the belief that America is too diverse, therefore an "overarching culture" cannot be taught. In response to this argument, it is important to understand that America has unique attributes, which transcend across the nation providing a consistent view to non-Americans.[44]

Another rebuttal to the notion of teaching American culture would be the concept that it is more important to teach the strategic corporal cultural elements that could cause embarrassment to the United States given limited time and constrained resources. Although the U.S. military is overextended and performing non-core competencies missions, it is important to understand that culture is a primary source of self-determination. Creating soldiers who are literate in their own culture and sensitized to their own biases will allow new experiences to be viewed without prejudice. According to Colonel McFarland, "Culturally literate soldiers understand and appreciate their own beliefs, behaviors, values and norms, but they are also aware of how their perspectives might affect other cultures. Achieving self-awareness of our own cultural assumptions enables us to use this understanding in relations with others."[45]

A final argument to contradict the need for military members to learn American culture is the concept that the knowledge and application of its principles are more the responsibility of American politicians and/or the U.S. State Department. While this may be true, the interaction of U.S. military members in situations other than combat demands a

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greater understanding of culture. Even with the U.S. State Department leading America's international engagement efforts, U.S. military members will continue to interact with their coalition counterparts and indigenous populations.

Recommendations

As indicated previously, the most effective method by which to teach another culture is through a comprehensive understanding of one's own culture. The U.S. military should continue its current direction of including cultural training regarding others into accession programs, professional military education courses and predeployment preparation; however, additional information must be added in order to ensure military members are literate when it comes to their own culture. A comprehensive list of specifics related to another culture without the code book of how to interpret them through one's own cultural lens is as useful as providing a nourishing meal of soup without a bowl to put it in. Moreover, simulations and exercises need to be scripted in a non-biased manner in order to accurately represent the appropriate situations to be examined, thus eliminating mirror imaging.

Given that many businesses and industries have already embraced this concept, training models should be relatively easy to obtain and could be adapted for military use. Specialized study programs are available through a variety of sources; however, a general awareness is what's required for the average military member. A key aspect in the realization of this type of training is that the material is introduced as a part of initial technical training and revisited often throughout a military member's career. It is important that the practical use of the cultural knowledge be understood in order for the material to be acted upon.[46] The concept of teaching leaders and soldiers how to think about culture as it

relates to operations in a foreign environment matters more in the long term than just

teaching them what to think about as it relates to the current environment.[47]

Conclusion

Culture is a two way street. While the U.S. military focus on understanding the

culture of other societies is admirable, it is only half the battle. Foreign cultures are

simultaneously interacting with the United States and subsequently viewing the actions and

attitudes displayed by the U.S. military through their own cultural lens. Therefore, it falls

upon the United States to better understand its actions as it relates to culture and the

subsequent perceptions by non-Americans.

The business and communication fields have already identified the need for a better

understanding of American culture when operating abroad. Furthermore, social

psychologists and anthropologists have recognized this fact and regularly attempt to mitigate

ethnocentrism when conducting intercultural communication. In looking at the two

operational examples noted above, culture may not have been the single missing ingredient in

the recipe for success, but it may have provided a little more time, a little more

understanding, and potentially an opening for a breakthrough as a result of seeing the world

through a different set of eyes.

NOTES

[1] References to "American culture" throughout this paper should be interpreted as the culture of the United States of America and not those cultures of North, Central and/or South America, which will be identified separately.

[2] Maxie McFarland, "Military Cultural Education" *Military Review* 85, 2 (Mar/Apr 2005): 65.

[3] A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1952) as referenced by Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc, 2006): 386.

[4] Brooks Peterson. *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures* (Yarmouth, MA: Intercultural Press, 2004), 17.

[5] William A. Haviland, Dana Walrath, Harold E.L. Prins and Bunny McBride, *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge (Twelfth Edition)* (Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2008), 26.

[6] The discussion of culture in this paper is separate from the concept of "military culture". For more information on this subject see Carl Builder, *The Masks of War; American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: The RAND Corporation, 1989).

[7] William D. Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for U.S. Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 103.

[8] JP 2-0 includes 3 references to "culture" and 11 references to "cultural"; JP 3-0 includes 7 references to "culture" and 16 references to "cultural" within the document. While both documents specify that gaining cultural knowledge is important, neither document provides a definition or method by which the action should be accomplished. Of note, JP 2-0 provides a definition for "human factors" which more closely references the various influences which impact decision-making; however, the explanation provided references culture as one of the key aspects without further clarification. Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence*, Joint Publication (JP) 2-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 22 June 2007); and Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 13 February 2008).

[9] Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 31 October 2009), 138.

[10] The Army has designated the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) as the proponent of cultural training. Additional information can be found at http://www.tradoc.army.mil/. Air University operates the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) to develop cross-cultural awareness within the Air Force. More information can be found at http://www.culture.af.edu/. The Navy has established the Center for Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (CLREC) in order to coordinate language, cultural, and regional familiarization training across the Navy. Additional information can be found at http://www.navy.mil/. The Marine Corps operates the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) which provides training through Marine Expeditionary Force Liaison Officers, Language Learning Resource Centers and mobile-training teams. More information on these tools can be found at http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/ caocl/.

[11] Benjamin C. Freakley, "Cultural Awareness and Combat Power" *Infantry* 94, 2 (Mar/Apr 2005): 1.

[12] Andrew W. Stewart, *Friction in U.S. Foreign Policy: Cultural Difficulties with the World* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, June 2006), 18.

[13] James B. Higgins, "Culture Shock: Overhauling the Mentality of the Military" *Marine Corps Gazette* 90, 2 (Feb 2006): 48.

[14] Mark S. Leslie, "Integrating Cultural Sensitivity into Combat Operations" *Armor* 116, 1 (Jan/Feb 2007): 35.

[15] Higgins, *Culture Shock: Overhauling the Mentality of the Military,* 50.

[16] Joel B. Krauss. "Cultural Awareness in Stability and Support Operations" *Infantry* 89, 1 (Jan/Feb 1999): 16.

[17] Dave Dilegge, "Zinni's Considerations Revisited" *Small Wars Journal* (17 Dec 2007), http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/12/zinnis-considerations-revisite/ (accessed 9 April 2010).

[18] Margaret L. Andersen and Howard Francis Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2005), 67.

[19] With the emergence of nations and nationalism in the 19th century, all of mankind has become categorized within an imagined state structure with defined boundaries. However, not all state structures conform to the identity associated with a given culture within the same area. As a result, all cultures have developed a differentiation of "us" vs. "them." This inherent ethnocentrism leads to an automatic and even unconscious belief that "my way is better." These boundaries, coupled with political motives and interests inevitably leads

to cultural conflict. For more information on this subject see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, NY: Verso, 1983).

[20] Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands (2nd Edition)* (Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2006), ix.

[21] Ibid., x.

[22] Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 2.

[23] Lawrence R. Frey, Dennis S. Gouran, Marshall Scott Poole. *The Handbook of Group Communication Theory and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1999), 126.

[24] Robert Francis Lewis, "Recommendations for Interviewing, Interrogating, or Polygraphing the Radical Fundamentalist Terrorist" (research paper, University of Wisconsin, Platteville, 2008), 55.

[25] Morrison and Conaway, *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands (2nd Edition)*, xi.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Peterson. *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, 41.

[29] McFarland, *Military Cultural Education*, 67.

[30] Ibid., 66.

[31] Mark S. Leslie, "Cultural Understanding: The Cornerstone of Success in a COIN Environment" *Infantry* 96, 4 (Jul/Aug 2007): 9.

[32] Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, "A European Considers the Influence of American Culture" *eJournal USA* (Feb 06), http://www.america.gov/st/business-english/2006/February/20080608094132xjyrreP0.2717859.html (accessed 12 April 2010).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Gary Wederspahn, "Expat Training" *T&D* 56, 2 (Feb 2002): 68.

[35] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Promoting Cultural Sensitivity: A Practical Guide for Tuberculosis Programs That Provide Services to Persons from Somalia*, (Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008), 18, http://www.cdc.gov/tb/publications/guidestoolkits/EthnographicGuides/Somalia/chapters/SomaliTBBooklet.pdf (accessed 9 April 2010).

[36] Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries*, 133.

[37] Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst, "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention" *Foreign Affairs* 75, 2 (Mar/Apr 1996), 70, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~jwestern/ir317/clark.htm (accessed 8 April 2010).

[38] Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries*, 134.

[39] Jim Naureckas, "Media on the Somalia Intervention: Tragedy Made Simple" Extra (Mar 1993), http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1211 (accessed 12 April 2010).

[40] In an interview conducted three days prior to commencement of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Vice President Dick Cheney asserted that the U.S. military would be greeted by the Iraqi people as liberators upon their arrival due to the dire situation in the country. Dick Cheney, Vice President of the United States, interview by Tim Russert, 14 September 2003, NBC News' Meet the Press, http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/cheneymeetthepress.htm (accessed 21 April 2010).

[41] An individual's cultural identity can be better understood using the Scale of Identities. For example, Middle East and North African nations typically associate themselves with 3, 4/6, and 5 whereas the U.S. and other Western nations often view the world through 1, 2, and 8. These differences in identity, unless recognized, can complicate military operations and the associated planning effort. Peter Bechtold, "African Culture and History" Powerpoint, 10 September 2009, Newport, RI: Naval War College, Africa Fall Elective 661.

[42] "A rentier state is one where significant amounts of oil/mineral royalties (rents) accrue directly to the state and where only a few are engaged in the generation of this rent (wealth), the majority being only involved in the distribution or utilization of it." Michael Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53 (April 2001): 329, http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccc/publications/OnlineJournal/2004/mar/looneyMar04.html (accessed 11 April 2010).

[43] Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries*, 63.

[44] Larry L. Naylor, *American Culture: Myth and Reality of a Culture of Diversity* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1998), 40-43.

[45] McFarland, *Military Cultural Education,* 63.

[46] Robert H.E. Gooren, "Soldiering in Unfamiliar Places: The Dutch Approach" *Military Review* 86, 2 (Mar/Apr 2006): 58.

[47] Henri Boré, "Complex Operations in Africa, Operational Culture Training in the French Military" *Military Review* 89, 2 (Mar/Apr 2009): 71.

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