CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE/COLLÉGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES COURSE 8

TO CLASH OR NOT TO CLASH:
CANADIAN AND ISLAMIC VALUES
ON CANADIAN FORCES' DEPLOYED OPERATIONS

By/par Lieutenant-Colonel M.D.Makulowich

Abstract

Canadian Forces will almost inevitably face a clash between Canadian and Islamic cultural values during many deployed operations. This paper examines a limited number of these cultural friction points, namely Religion, Governance, History and Time, their impact on operations and argues how we need to be more *cultural intelligent* including recommendations on how to achieve this. Three overarching recommendations are proposed to improve cultural education in the Canadian Forces – advance from the present token *Cultural Awareness* to a more comprehensive *Cultural Intelligence*; assigning a secondary classification of a foreign area officer; and incorporate *cultural intelligence* formally into Canadian doctrine. Commanders and their staffs will need to incorporate more thorough cultural assessments into their planning cycles, and their decision-making processes. The most important factor for operations in the Islamic world, is the comprehension of the religion's central role in all aspects of Islamic society, then accrediting this fact due respect and priority. A critical component of assisting the governance of a failed or failing state will be a thorough understanding of the importance of its sectarian composition and then the identification and tactful empowerment of key native leadership in pursuit of operational objectives. Plans will have to incorporate not only the powerful sects of society but also accommodate minorities in order to assist in the development of a self-sustaining society. It will also be necessary to understand Muslim societies' difficulties in the move towards democracy and to support the conditions for the gradual establishment from within of an *Islamic civil society* proposed by many Muslim modernists. Comprehension of the importance of the historic roots of past conflicts on the collective Islamic psyche will assist the development of policies including balanced use of force that will aim to avoid further inflammation of old grievances.

A deployed commander who is ignorant of or minimizes the importance of the Islamic culture will fortify his enemy, offend his allies, isolate his own forces, and jeopardize his public support. Only through improved *cultural intelligence* will an operational level commander be able to prepare his force, plan wisely and execute successful operations in the future.

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Cultural Intelligence is the greatest need of the commander on the ground and the one [if lacking] *that leads him into more problems*.

General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC[1]

PART I - INTRODUCTION

Three converging themes lead to the likelihood that Canadian operational level commanders will face a clash of Canadian and Islamic cultural values in future deployed operations. First, historian and sociologist Samuel P Huntington in his much debated 1993 essay, *The Clash of Civilizations* asserted that " the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural."[2] In the same treatise Huntington[3] and many other academic scholars such as Bernard Lewis,[4] John Esposito,[5] and Amin Saikal[6] identify that the clash between Islamic and Western cultures will be the dominant conflict in the future. Secondly, Canadian national policy statements of "security in Canada starts with security abroad… This is especially in the case of failed and failing states"[7] will continue to commit Canadian Forces overseas as instruments of international policy and change. Finally, based on our recent operational

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[1] General Anthony C. Zinni, quoted in Michael Trabun, *"When the West Meets Islam: Cultural Issues and Considerations for Regional Combatant Commander,"* (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Report, 2004), 14.

[2] Huntington's model of monolithic civilizations clashing is not perfect as there is considerable variation within civilizations and there are considerable intra-state clashes ongoing also. SP Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs,* (Summer 1993), 22.

[3] Ibid, 32.

[4] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly,* Volume 266 (September 1990), 55.

[5] John Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 127.

[6] Amin Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation?* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan Books, 2003), 1.

[7] Department of National Defence, *Canada's International Policy Statement, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World, Defence* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2005), 2.

history in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Somalia, Eritrea and considering the unstable and

strategic region of the Middle East, most future Canadian Forces' theatres of operations

will likely be in Muslim countries or countries having a considerable Muslim

population.[8]

Based on these three converging themes, the premise of this paper is that

deployed Canadian operational level commanders will not be as efficient as they should

be as the full impact of the differences between Canadian and Islamic values will not be

fully recognized and understood. Commanders and their staffs will naturally view

operations through their own Western cultural prism. Within its restricted scope, this

paper will examine only a specific number of these cultural friction points, their impact

on operations, and will argue how Canadian operational level commanders and their

staffs need to be more *culturally intelligent* by proposing means to mitigate or even avoid

these potential 'clashes' of cultural values in order to execute more effective international

operations.

PART II – UNDERSTANDING CULTURE, AND BACKGROUND

"Culture, all that is vague and intangible, is not generally integrated into planning,

except at the superficial level."[9] Besides the obvious understanding of the culture of any

adversary, it is equally or even more critical for any Canadian commander to comprehend

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[8] It is acknowledged that scope also exists for deployment to non-Muslim states such as a number of African or Caribbean states which meet the Canadian government's description of failed or failing states.
[9] Paul Belbutowski, "Strategic Implications of Cultures in Conflict," *Parameters* (Spring 1996), 9

fully the culture of the people he is tasked to assist in his theatre of 'failed and failing states'. Effects based operations concentrating on non-kinetic means and long term operations based on culture change will more likely be the traits of future stability and nation-building operations rather than relatively simplistic attrition campaigning against conventional forces with kinetic means. A self-centred Ptolemaic or ethnocentric approach to campaign planning will only result in a recipe for arrogant disaster. Development and subsequent utilization of cultural intelligence will be key for successful deployed operations. Differences in cultures may be irreconcilable or even desirable not to mutate but a deployed commander working from a platform of cultural intelligence vice cultural ignorance will allow be considerably more effective.

The Oxford Dictionary broadly defines 'culture' as the "customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group."[10]   From such a broad scope, this paper will examine only a limited number of these potential cultural friction points, namely: Religion; Governance; History; and Sense of Time. As with all things *intangible and vague,* these cultural areas are not distinct but are intertwined and overlapping. A brief examination of the differing perspectives of Western and Islamic cultures in each area will be completed with accompanying proposals deduced for mitigating or avoiding these differences.

This paper will attempt to avoid the judgment of which culture is better. However, some of these judgments and the subsequent imposition of values is inevitable as some are already completed by Western society and are given to operational level

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[10] Oxford dictionary. http://dictionary.oed.com; Internet accessed 30 September 2005

commanders as immutable such as the "projection of Canadian values and interests into the world"[11] and the "pursuit of democracy, human rights, and rule of law".[12] It should also be noted that as only cultural friction points will be looked at in the context of this paper, many of the positive common points of Islamic and Western cultures will go unmentioned; unfortunately as they do in reality.

Several other background details such as terms and definitions should be covered early. This paper will include Canadian culture as part of Western civilization and will mostly use these terms interchangeably. This general approach will allow most of this paper's conclusions to be of utility to other international audiences. The potential impact of several more specific Canadian values such as multiculturalism and compromise that feature strongly in Canadian culture will also be discussed. *Civilization* and its more specific descriptive *culture* will also be used interchangeably.

Islam describes both a civilization and a religion; a concept without parallel in the more separate Western civilization and Judeo-Christian religious ideology. The terms *Muslim* and *Islamic* are not exactly interchangeable. *Muslim* refers to a more generic "followers of Islam" context that is best used to describe individuals and broad societal aspects such as nation-states. *Islamic*, although similar, has a more religious connotation referring to practices, values and culture based on the Islamic religion.[13] The term

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[11] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada's International Policy Statement, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World, Overview* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 2005), Prime Minister's Foreword, i.
[12] *Ibid.*, 4
[13] Doctor Houchang Hassan-Yari, conversation with author, 18 October 2005.

Islamist has a connotation of militancy describing fundamentalist or radical followers of

Islam.

It is acknowledged that this paper will use a very broadband approach in

comparing Western with overall Islamic values vice specific countries. Islam is the

world's second largest religion, and its 1.5 billion Muslims constitute the majority

populations in 57 nations and significant portions in 91 others.[14] Understandably, "there

is no Islam per se that can be treated as a single, cohesive, coherent, comprehensive,

monolithic entity."[15] However, rather than select a specific current Muslim theatre of

operations, this generalization is done deliberately in order to have relevance for a

generation of future commanders and their operations. Although Huntington's model of

civilizational clashes is used here as a framework, it is not perfect as it is acknowledged

that there can also be considerable simultaneous intra-state violence, for example Iraq

and Algeria. Additionally with the wide spectrum represented in the Islamic world, some

Muslim societies bear greater resemblance to inter-civilizational neighbours than their

own Islamic civilization, for example Bosnian Muslims have more in common with

Europeans that they do with Middle Eastern Muslims.

There are numerous varying descriptions of this broad Muslim spectrum, but for

this discussion, this paper will utilize the following description from Amin Saikal who

categorized four main groups in Muslim society. First are modernist Muslims who

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[14] The OIC has recently expanded to 57 Islamic states. Brigadier Khalaf Shraa, "Moral Teachings of Islam Not As Seen By Al Qaeda or Other Groups,"
(Carlisle, Pennsylvannia: US Army War College Paper, 2005), 10.
[15]Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser, *A Sense of Seige: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 1-2.

uphold Islam as a dynamic ideology, are open to modernity and wish to work within existing national and international structures. They are not sycophants of the status quo but see a need to improve their society with non-violent transformation. The second group are radical Islamists who adhere to the principles of Islam but adapt the Islamic Holy Book, the Qur'an, to suit their political purposes. Viewing political and social imposition and violence as legitimate to assert their religious cultural identity, they actively challenge outside powers or their own governments. The third group are Islamist fundamentalists who dogmatically adhere to a strict literal interpretation of Islam based on original scriptures and a specific school of thought from a particular Islamic scholar. The final group, and in the majority, are the grassroots Muslims who follow Islam as a faith and can be either apolitical or political dependant on the threat to their faith or way of life. For the most part, they can be easily mobilized and galvanized into action especially by radical and fundamentalist Islamists.[16] These four groupings are obviously not concrete divisions, but have a considerable degree of overlap particularly with the second and third groups, and can transform with time based on their environment.

PART III – FRICTION POINTS

Religion

"Islam is not only a matter of faith and practice; it is also an identity and loyalty – for many an identity and loyalty that transcends all others."[17] This contributes to the forming of a loose Pan–Islamic construct or *ummah* across nation-states. The most

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[16] Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation?* 19.

[17] Bernard Lewis, The *Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 11.

important defining trait of the Islamic religion is the submission of the individual to the religion. This is codified in the first of Islam's Five Pillars, as "there is no God but God."[18] In fact, one of the meanings of the word *Islam* is "to submit to the will of Allah."[19] By comparison, Judeo-Christianity has never been the major defining trait of individuals of Western civilization, and its relative importance is eroding even further with continued secularism.[20] Westerners predominately view themselves as members of a nation-state first. Consequently, a Task Force commander must break out of his narrow Western view of national boundaries and his regional perspective, and must maintain a global perspective with a global Area of Interest as rocket attacks 4000 kilometres away in Palestine reverberates loudly in an Area of Operations in Islamic Afghanistan. Additionally, the advent of non-state actors like Al Qaeda, and their global effects which are typically unrestricted by man-made boundaries, add to the requirement for a global perspective.

The West's Holy Scriptures, the Bible and the Torah, are viewed as God's indirect guidance delivered through Jesus but recorded by various thiTJHrarion. ese re

for all aspects of life. Complementary and amplifying documents written by Mohammed's immediate successors and key followers are the *Shari'a* and the *Hadith*. This written direction is considered as God's will, gives key direction for all aspects of daily life, and requires that all Muslims submit to it in accordance with Islam's First Pillar of submission. The revered status of the Qur'an as a symbol of God's direct communications was seen in the West during the allegation of abuse of the Qur'an by US prison guards in Guantanimo Bay, Cuba and subsequent world wide demonstrations in protest in 2005. It is this written direction that fundamentalist Islamists insist on a literal return to; radical Islamists interpret and manipulate for political means; modernist Muslims find as guidance vice direction that can be flexed by modern conditions: and finally Western commanders need to accommodate in their planning. Thus, a key enabler for a Canadian commander will be to include an Islamic academic, not just the current Political Advisor, on his staff to advise him of not only religious pitfalls but also the use of the Qur'an to legitimize his force's actions.

The minority Islamic sect of about 15% of the world's Muslims, the *Shi'ite*, traditionally have Imam clerics or Ayatollahs who are historically empowered to make more liberal interpretations of the Qur'an including issuance of *Fatwahs* or legal rulings in Islamic jurisprudence. These rulings include the more extreme and infamous such as death penalties as in Ayatollah Khomeini's sentencing of Salman Rushdie in 1989, or declarations of war as in Osama Bin Laden's against the West as *infidels* in October 2001. Many of these rulings are viewed in Western and many Muslim eyes as manipulation for political gain. The other branch of Islam, the majority *Sunni* sect,

follows the Sunna with clerical Ulema with a more fundamentalist and thus traditional interpretation. Thus Islam's men of religion, the Ulema of the Sunni and especially the Imams of the Shi'ite Sect, are considered more as jurists than just theologians which credits them with inordinate influence in Muslim society including being the *de facto* power in many Muslim societies vice the figurehead government.[21] Identification of these real power brokers with the subsequent garnering the cooperation or if necessary the isolating of the clerics in a Muslim society will be key for deployed commanders in creating stable environments.

One of the key lightning rods of conflict between the two cultures is the treatment of women. In Canada, women's equality rights are enshrined in its Charter of Rights and Freedom[22] and numerous affirmative action programs are in place to make up ground for past injustices. In the Islamic faith, women are to be revered and protected in principle but even the Shari'a includes inequalities such as reduced inheritance, divorce and testimonial rights while other local interpretations include restrictions on education, dress, driving, and voting. Some of the restrictions are based on patriarchal tribal customs but find backing in Islamic doctrine. A recent example of the cultural differences were the attempts to incorporate aspects of Shari'a family law, particularly disparate women rights, into Western law that were stopped in France and the provinces of Quebec and Ontario within the last year. This was based on societal law being above

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[21] Examples range from Saudi Arabia where the ruling family rules in consultation with the clerics to Iran where the religious clerics have supremacy over the ruling government to the Taliban model where the clerics and political authorities were one and the same. Angel Rabasa, et al. *The Muslim World After 9/11* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004), 26.
[22] Department of Justice, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Ottawa: Department of Justice, 1982), 4.

cultural or religious law due to 'inequalities' that these would create. Deployed Canadian Forces will find these dichotomies difficult and will have to walk a fine balance between cultural sensitivities and own national rights. Operational commanders may have to initially de-select women personnel in some sensitive key negotiations or interface positions with fundamentalist and radical Islamists until better conditions for success are set. Oppositely, women may sometimes be selected to showcase gender equality for positive effect. The advantages of gender utility for operational purposes will have to be carefully balanced on an individual case basis in consideration of the perception of the internal Task Force and national inequalities it causes.

One of the key tests of civility as a defining component of a civilization is tolerance – the willingness to co-exist with those who practice and hold other beliefs.[23] Historically, both Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions have had periods of disgraceful intolerance especially religious intolerance, for example the Spanish Inquisition or the Crusades. In the modern age, both religions describe themselves as peaceful and tolerant. In the West, mainstream civilization is now generally tolerant of other religions based on the precedence of individual rights such as the freedom of religion that is enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.[24] Even the ex-head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II, addressed internationally the need for religious tolerance on numerous occasions.[25] There are a few throwbacks in the West to this concept of tolerance such as right wing theologians like Reverend Jerry Fallwell, or the banning of

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[23]Bernard Lewis, What *Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113.
[24] Department of Justice, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 4
[25] Paul Marshal, Roberta Green and Lela Gilbert, *Islam at a Cross roads: Understanding Its Beliefs, History and Conflicts* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Books, 2002), 36.

religious attire in the French School system but the Western mainstream is relatively tolerant of religion by law. By comparison, Islam with doctrine written 1400 years ago is more of an absolutist faith that can be construed as comparatively intolerant, especially of other religions.[26] The Qur'an divides the world into two entities: *Dar al Islam*, the house of Islam for practitioners of the Islamic faith; and *Dar al Harb*, the house of war for the rest of the world of unbelievers or the *infidels*. There are two main types of *jihad* or holy war: the first refers towards an individual's personal spiritual struggle; and the second is external warfare when Islamic religion or way of life, and independence is threatened.[27] This second type of warfare is the "us versus them" argument often quoted for justification of jihad against infidels, non-believers, for both intra- and inter-state violence including at the extreme – unlimited terrorism where the end justifies any means. A subset of this jihad is defensive jihad, which obligates all Muslims to participate. This is operationally significant as a popular defensive jihad could justify wide spread support for an insurgency and increase the difficulty of developing Rules of Engagement where the lines between combatant and non-combatant become blurred. Operational level campaign design, especially its Information Operations' objectives and the judicious restraint of application of force, will have to account for this intolerance by first avoiding incidents inflaming this intolerance and propagating its justification of jihad. Secondly, through Information Operations including tactful cultural education of the indigenous, this intolerance should be reduced gradually. This will ensure force protection, and will secure legitimacy of the mission in the eyes of the native people.

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[26] The Qu'ran is contradictory with references to tolerance and then intolerance with modern Islamic groups selectively applying their applicable portion.
[27] Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation?* 26-27.

Another recent phenomenon has been the advent of suicide bombers. Although suicide is expressly forbidden in the Qur'an, some radical Islamist clerics have manipulated the Qur'an as authorizing this form of suicide as part of an offensive jihad against infidels. Employing only increased Task Force defensive force protection measures against this elusive and persistent threat will only lead to an ineffective 'bunker' mentality. Offensive action to eliminate the root cultural causes of official support and public idolation will be necessary through de-legitimatizing and isolating on the cultural plane in order to secure long-term success.

"In summary, Islam as a faith is not a problem. Rather the battle is over its uses where Islam as a theology is used as a powerful political weapon" [28] against declared external enemies, often the West, and also against internal enemies, such as the resident regime. This is the crux of the issue of religion; although Islam, the religion, is as peaceful and as respectful as other religions, it is the Islamic religion's greater potential to be manipulated politically as a result of its requirements of the submissiveness of its followers and the universality of the religion's application to all aspects of life that is omnipotent. An operational commander will have to overcome his secular based experience to understand the potency and the all-inclusive nature of Islamic religion on deployed operations.

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[28] Fuller, *A Sense of Seige: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, 106.

Governance

The next area of discussion is Governance and even this paper's construct shows a degree of Western filter as this topic area is currently separate from Religion while in an Islamic construct, it could have been addressed previously in the area of Religion.

Albeit recent in history, secularism is now a universal trait of modern Western governance. There are still small influential religious groups such as the Christian Right in the United States, or the Likud and Mafdal parties in Israel that inordinately affect governmental decision-making but normally secularism and liberal democracy go hand in hand. By comparison, there is limited to no separation of mosque and state in most Islamic nations. This lack of separation evolves from the original prophet, Mohammed, who founded Islam and was its combined spiritual, governing, and military leader. As stated earlier, today's Islamic religious clerics have inordinate influence in Muslim society as they are considered more as jurists rather than just theologians. Their positions range from the lead ideologist that governments seek concurrence from to being the *de facto* government. Canadian operational commanders will have to break their secular optics, understand this key difference, and garner the cooperation of, or if necessary isolate, the real leaders in an Islamic society in accordance with their objectives. Religion and the Islamic state is so intertwined that full separation is unlikely but that some distancing between the mosque and state may be possible as a precursor to a degree of liberal democracy and greater inclusion of human rights. [29] Overall, a deployed

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[29] Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg, *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), xx.

commander will have to find solutions in his policies and objectives to accommodate the central role of religion in Islamic society and its governance, and not just seek a mirror image of Western society.

The other aspect of Governance where there is likely to be a significant cultural difference is with the concept of democracy. In the West, liberal democracy is almost universal in varying degrees. Most Western authorities see liberal democracy, with its accompanying concepts of human rights and rule of law, as an exportable panacea for the world's trouble spots. A quick review of western nations' international policy statements keys on these three concepts – democracy, human rights, and rule of law. [30],[31] Exportation of democracy or at least some degree of it is likely going to be part of the assigned mandate of any Canadian Task Force commander.

By comparison, Islam has a dismal record with democracies. Of the 57 Islamic states in the Organization of Islamic Conference, only Turkey can be regarded as a functioning democracy; however, in many ways, it is a troubled democracy that is having some resurgence of fundamental Islamism recently.[32] Of the remainder, about another 10, such as Iran under ex-President Khatami, Jordan under King Hussein, and Malaysia's constitutional monarchy have some degree of elected representation but can be viewed more as virtual democracies where veiled authoritarian states to date have adopted forms

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[30] Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Canada's International Policy Statement, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World, Overview,* 4.

[31] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK, *United Kingdom International Priorities: A Strategy for the FCO, Section 4, Strategic International Priorities,* http://www.fco.gov.uk; Internet; accessed 10 October 2005.

[32] Larry Diamond, Marc Plattner, and Daniel Brumberg. *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East* Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 210.

of popular representation to establish partial claim to electoral legitimacy.[33] A key

reason for this statistic is the troubled history of contact between Islam and 'democracy'

through its history of colonialism and repression from western sponsored regimes but this

historical root will be examined in detail later. However, a contributing factor for

democracy's difficulty in Muslim states exists in the relative incompatibility of its

cultural principles. In the West, democracy is based primarily on individualism, and trust

in nation-state institutions. Islamic political culture, dominated by its religious side, is

more based on submission of oneself to the community and religion, and its tribal or

relationship roots. The evolution of democracy in the West normally had components of

religion in support of the democratic movements in opposition against authoritative

regimes. In Muslim history, many religious parties such as fundamentalist or radical

Islamists have also been in

law and then garnering the people's trust in these institutions vice local tribal loyalties.

Third, in many Islamic societies, there are parallel tribal institutions that may or may not

coincide with the current nation-state political or religious structures; examples are Saudi

Arabia's House of Saud, the majority Pashtun tribe of Afghanistan, or the Sunni and

Shi'ite sects struggling in Iraq.[34] Knowledge of the local sectarian structure will have to

be woven into operational campaign design that will accommodate not only the majority

but also minority sects to guarantee sustained peace and success. Relationship-based

tribal or group loyalties on the intrastate level are even more valued in Islamic societies,

thus the establishment and maintenance of long term relationships will be a key to

success. Due consideration will need to be given to the selection of the Task Force

commander and his key subordinates who will be responsible for interface with

indigenous populations; transformational leadership or relationship development ability

will be prized above all. Officers who are more transactional or objective driven would

be better retained in staff positions away from key interface challenges.

Democracy in Islamic society is not totally a bleak prospect. There is a

significant element of Islamic modernists who believe that Islam is compatible with

democracy as the Qur'an leaves enough flexibility for a degree of secularism and that

local democracy just needs to be adapted to be in concert with Islamic religious

principles. In a compromise framework, a form of *Islamic civil society* or *Islamic*

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[34] When Saddam Hussein's Ba'thist party at the national level was removed by force in 2003, power unintentionally reverted to its most basic and stable form in Iraq – its 156 tribes which was a direct result of the US' misunderstanding of Iraqi tribal culture. Montgomery McFate. "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," *Joint Forces Quarterly,* Issue 38, (Summer 2005). Journal on-line; available from http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/jfq_pubs/1038.pdf ; Internet; accessed 25 September 2005, 44.

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democracy is possible.[35] Ex-Iranian President Khatami, President Wahid of Indonesia, and President Karzai of Afghanistan are good examples of these successful modernists. But success is mixed as seen in Iran's history where events in the Middle East and the United States' branding of Iran as a member of the *axis of evil* created a backlash of fundamentalism resulting in the election of a hard-liner anti-democratic president in 2005. Change for sustainable democracy will have to come from within a Muslim country but a deployed force can help set the conditions for success of that change. Unwelcome imposition of a foreign political process by external forces will likely be of short term only. Thus, a commander will have to play a tactful balancing act of supporting forces of change in an area of operation without too much overt support that may backfire on the overall process if a friendly Muslim government is labeled as a puppet regime or an *apostate* - 'a believer who has forsaken Islam', by those fundamentalists and radicals who are most against modernization. The appellation of *apostate* is the most derogatory term in the Islamic lexicon as it incurs the wrath of a mandatory jihad by all Muslims with no human forgiveness.[36] Thus, a deployed commander may find the element of society, which he is assisting, is being isolated through religion. Consequently, re-legitimization of the party or encouraged removal of its offending practices should be a top Information Operation objective.

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[35] Saikal, *Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation?* 28-29, 83-84.
[36] Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam,* 40-41.

Another approach to setting conditions for democracy is to involve some of the almost half of the world's Muslims, who live in non-Islamic democratic countries.[37] This relatively untapped resource of those, who have successfully balanced Islam and democracy in their lives, can be brought to theatre and employed as role models by the task force. Imagine the positive impact that a mosque funded and partially staffed by Canadian Muslims could have in a theatre of operations. This policy would not be without risk as there is a danger of these modernists being labeled as *apostates*, and targeted by radical elements according to their version of the Qur'an.

History

History shapes cultures to a significant degree. Western nation states tend to be more forward looking and put their history in a box behind them. By comparison, history matters to Muslims.[38] Michael Trabaun writes "an understanding of the role of history in the Arab Islamic culture provides the contextual backdrop against which one can begin to understand the sense of humiliation, frustration, and contempt for the West that creates the lens through which contemporary Muslims in the Arab corps view their world, and contribute to the underlying causes for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism."[39] Although this quote concentrates on Arab Muslims, it can be expanded to the entire Islamic civilization without distortion.

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[37] The 2001 Canadian census lists 580,000 Muslims in Canada and identifies Islam as the fastest growing major religion and forecasts that it will become the second largest Canadian religion behind Christianity by 2011. Statistics Canada, *Canadian Census 2001*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2001).
[38] Marshal, *Islam at a Cross roads: Understanding Its Beliefs, History and Conflicts,* 81.
[39] Michael Trabun, *"When the West Meets Islam: Cultural Issues and Considerations for Regional Combatant Commander,"* (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College Report, 2004), 14.

The sense of humiliation and frustration that permeates the Muslim psyche comes from its relative decline in world status. For a thousand plus years, Islam was the world's dominant civilization fulfilling Mohammed's promise of victory and included not just military power and territorial expansion but the superiority of its arts, sciences and commerce. Then over three centuries its fortune declined slowly as its empire's borders receded and its fortunes and progress stalled in comparison to the rapidly modernizing West and Orient. The nadir was Islam's subjugation into colonies during the colonial 19th and early 20th centuries and the resultant fracturing of Islamic coherence. Continued humiliation carried on in the 20th century with a series of reversals against the Israeli state and then the invasion of several Muslim states – Iraq twice and Afghanistan by western states. The resulting dichotomy between Islamic religion's precept of being God's *favoured* clashes with their present situation as a subordinate entity – politically, militarily, economically and technologically. From this sense of humiliation and frustration springs a loose cultural sense of grievance against the West, which had displaced Islam as the World's current dominant power.

It is also human nature to first lay blame on others for one's misfortunes or reversals. Radical Islamists tend to blame foreign intervention and apostate governments for their current state, which they use to justify violent opposition including terrorism. Fundamentalist Islamists lay the blame primarily at the abandonment of principles of Islam by both local governments and the people, and seek a return to the ancient fundamentals of the Qur'an. Modernist Muslims blame the current state of affairs on the lack of modernism and secularism in keeping up with a changing world. Conversely,

some Westerners blame current cultural conflict on Islam's reluctance to mirror its principles of democracy and human rights. Obviously diverging perceptions will have little chance of convergence without cultural understanding and compromise.

Considerable contempt for the West and its concepts also permeates Islamic society. This is partly due to its colonial legacy but more so to its post–colonial era involvement in the recent century where the West's selective application of democratic ideals and even full support of repressive regimes to selfishly establish a bulwark against communism during the Cold War and to secure a future supply of the strategic resource of oil. "The centuries of colonial rule followed by decades of authoritarian governments have created and perpetuated conditions that are not conducive to democracy."[40] There is good justification for an Islamic sense of grievance against the West's unrighteous past behavior and good grounds for suspicion of the West's future intents. Many Islamic groups view the West's foreign policies towards them as cultural imperialism and power domination.

This collective sense of grievance based on humiliation, frustration and contempt is one of the ubiquitous fuels that stokes a general underlying protest against Western policies and a varying degree of moral support for some radicalists' and fundamentalists' policies. For some Islamist groups, this sense of grievance also fuels the pseudo-justification to use all means necessary to reconcile this perceived grievance.[41] With the considerable truth in some of the root causes of this collective grievance, a theatre

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[40] Esposito, *Unholy War; Terror in the Name of Islam,* 149.
[41] An example of this sense of grievance was the widespread, but not universal, sentiment amongst major elements of Muslims, including in Canada, that the 9-11 attacks were justified by US past policies.

commander will have to design his Information Operations campaign to acknowledge but minimize the negatives of the past and, more importantly, to emphasize the positives and to concentrate on the future. A deployed commander will be faced with multiple challenges in a modern Three Block War construct – simultaneous combat operations against a segment of the population, stability operations including potentially counter-insurgency operations, and humanitarian or nation-building operations. For success in a theatre, he will have to balance his use of force so that it is complementary vice conflicting. For example, restrictions may have to be placed on combat operations against an extremist sect in order to limit collateral damage that would fuel the existing grievance and work counter to long-term stability. These restrained measures may be unpopular to an element of his force and elements of the public back home as it entails greater short-term risk to his force, and will require education through Information Operations for all to think of the long-term end-state. Lastly, due to the increased importance of cultural beliefs and perceptions, a deployed commander will have to develop some form of a 'reverse telescope' to see how the indigenous population is viewing his Task Force and his policies in the light of underlying grievances.

Another major fuel for contempt and hostility is the West's lopsided support for Israel, 'the Infidels' wedge', which is perceived as driving the Islamic African and Middle Eastern Muslim halves apart.[42] Thus, regardless of which Muslim country a Canadian Task Force is deployed to, its Area of Interest will still have to include Israel and Palestine due to its central roles in Islamic grievance.

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[42] Glenn Perry, "Huntington and His Critics: The West and Islam," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Volume 24, Number 1 (Winter 2002): 38.

Many conservative elements in Western societies criticize their leaders for not being more open and not laying the blame for today's Islamist terrorist problems on culture, especially Islamic religion. In fact, most of today's Western leaders, President Bush, Prime Ministers Blair and Martin have done exactly the opposite – blame individual terrorists and exonerate the Islamic culture.[43] This is a wise and very effective policy. Even though it has already been discussed that Islamic religion has considerable manipulative potential for political gain, wrongly assigning some of the blame specifically on religion would just inflame the situation, strengthen terrorist positions, and increase recruiting and legitimization for these organizations. Being culturally sensitive and targeting individuals manipulating their religion vice the overall culture with public statements and policies is a wise strategy for deployed commanders to emulate.

Sense of Time

The final cultural area for examination is a narrow one, and an unusual one - a sense of time. In the West, time is normally considered as quantitative and flowing along an absolute theoretic continuum. This leads to expectations of completion within a given time, for example, an operations' tour length, and subsequently to expectations of immediate or near immediate gratification. By comparison, Islamic, like the Oriental, culture views time more as qualitative and flowing along an esthetic or cosmic

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[43] Major exception was President Bush's ill considered use of the term "Crusades" in 2003 which was seized upon by Islamic opponents to invoke images of Middle Ages Crusades against Islam.

continuum.[44] As the individual is subordinate to the community or religion in Islam, so is an individual's time subordinated to communal time or to a more cosmic or endless time. On deployed operations, operational level commanders are working on relatively short and precise timelines due to force generational issues, government commitments, and limitations of own public support. Personally, they are also working within the construct of their own tour length. Commanders need to understand the dichotomy as their adversaries may be working to a very different time frame - a long term one where a deployed force just has to be waited out until Canadian home opinion or the cost of deployment in dollars or lives become too much to bear at home. Commanders may have to educate their troops, superiors and even the Canadian public in order to combat the expectations of immediate operational success.

PART IV - SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has highlighted selected potential friction points between Islamic and Western cultures, and their possible impact on operations. All of these can be avoided or at least mitigated by *culturally intelligent* commanders and staffs. Although not discussed directly as a solution to any individual friction point in the main body, the requirement for increased overarching Canadian Forces' cultural education to be able to understand and deal with these potential friction points should be obvious by now. Three overarching cultural educational recommendations are made that can be applied universally for any potential deployment and not just for Muslim countries. First, the

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[44] Belbutowski, "Strategic Implications of Cultures in Conflict," Parameters, 38.

present token Canadian Forces' *Cultural Awareness* needs to be systemically advanced to a more comprehensive *Cultural Intelligence*[45] through a series of cultural visits, inter-cultural dialogue and expansion into current professional education curriculum in addition to the current theatre mission specific training. Retired Rear Admiral Cebrowski, Director of the Office of US Force Transformation, addressed this directly as "the value of military intelligence is exceeded by that of social and cultural intelligence. We need the ability to look, understand, and operate deeply into the fault lines of societies."[46] Secondly, a system of assigning a secondary classification of a foreign area officer[47] with a specific regional area to military officers, similar to the US Army system, should be considered to develop a pool of educated officers with expertise, primarily cultural, in areas of likely deployment. Third, *cultural intelligence* needs to be formalized in our doctrine, especially within our Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield and our Operational Planning Processes.[48] All is not bleak for Canadian officers as they already have a good baseline of traits to deal with other cultures due to our national senses of multiculturalism and compromise. The national emphasis on multiculturalism and the bilingual nature of the Canadian Forces naturally equips our officers with the basics of cultural perception. In addition to the impact of multiculturalism, our normal role as a junior partner in multinational coalitions also

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[45] Lieutenant Commander John Coles. "Cultural Intelligence and Joint Intelligence Doctrine" Washington: Joint Forces Staff College Paper, 2005; available from http://www.jfsc.ndu.edu/college_resources/JOR/articles/Cultural_Intelligence.pdf; Internet accessed 10 September 2005, 2.

[46] Retired Rear Admiral Arthur Cebrowski quoted in McFate, 47.

[47] Foreign Area officers are advisors with a combination of regional experience, political-military awareness, and language qualification to act as a cross-cultural linkage. McFate, 46.

[48] Some initial advancement is slowly taking place in this area such as the Canadian Army's participation in ABCA's Cultural Working Groups. Colonel F. Lewis, Director Army Doctrine, conversation with author 16 October 2005.

shapes a distinct sense of compromise that has great utility for interacting with other cultures towards a common goal.

Commanders and their staffs will need to incorporate more thorough cultural assessments into their planning cycles, and their decision-making processes. Specific to operations in the Islamic world, the most important factor is the understanding of the importance that "Islam [, the religion,] is more deeply integrated into state and society than any other comparable religion"[49] and then accrediting this fact due respect and priority. Comprehension of the religion's central role in all aspects of Islamic society, will lead to the prioritized identification of influential religious leaders, and the garnering of their support for the task force's policies.

A critical component of assisting the governance of a failed or failing state will be a more thorough understanding of the importance of its sectarian composition and then the identification and tactful empowerment of key native leadership in pursuit of operational objectives. Plans will have to incorporate not only the powerful sects of society but also accommodate minorities in order to assist in the development of a self-sustaining society. It will also be necessary to understand Islamic difficulties in the move towards democracy and to support the conditions for the gradual establishment from within of an *Islamic civil society* proposed by many Islamic modernists.

Comprehension of the importance of the historic roots of past conflict on the collective Islamic psyche will assist the commander and his staff in the development of

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[49] Fuller, *A Sense of Seige: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West,* 2.

policies that will aim to avoid further inflammation of old grievances. Commanders will have to balance their use of force to complement their overall objective achievement. Some combat operations may have to be restricted to ensure the goals of long term stability are attained. A sustained "reverse telescope" tool will need to be developed to see how the Task Force and its policies are perceived in order to avoid a hubris effect.

Understanding the differences between Western construct of absolute or qualitative time and the subsequent demands for quick completion of mission as compared to the Islamic construct of long-term cosmic time will allow a commander to balance the expectations of his government and his own force with realistic time requirements in theatre.

Several important recommendations concerning commanders and their staffs also emerge. With the deployment to tribal- or relationship-based societies, selection of key commanders to be those with strong relationship or transformational leadership skills is even more important. Additionally, due to the complexities of Islamic religion, an Islamic academic on staff would be a force multiplier and enabler. Due to the cultural friction points being of an *intangible and vague* nature, information dominance though a robust Information Operations organization will become an even more important enabler and will have to be resourced accordingly and accorded the priority it deserves to be effective.

PART IV - CONCLUSION

A deployed commander who is ignorant of, or minimizes the importance of the culture of nation can "strengthen his enemy, offend his allies, alienate his own forces, and antagonize public opinion."[50] Only by first accounting for the cultural influences of religion, governance, history, time and others, will an operational level commander be able to prepare his force, plan intelligently and execute successful operations.

"Clashes of civilization are the greatest threat to world peace and a world order of civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war."[51] The world has witnessed many culture-based conflicts already and is currently seeing the smouldering start of another between elements of Islamic and Western societies. If radicalists like Osama Bin Laden, have their way then, in their own words, this can be escalated into a full scale cultural clash has been initiated - "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilian and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do."[52] It is up to the operational level commander to accomplish the exact opposite by any means possible in order to avoid Huntington's nightmare prophecy of civilizational clash. A commander deployed in Muslim countries may not be able to eliminate the clash of certain cultural values but he needs to minimize it or at least delay it to prevent its deterioration into a major conflict. One of his strongest weapons in his arsenal in the twenty-first century will be his *cultural intelligence*, which will allow him

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[50] Paul Wriggly. "The Impact of Religious Belief in the Theatre of Operations," *Naval War College Review*, Volume XLIX, No 2 (Spring 1996), 86.
[51] S.P.Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, 321.
[52] Osama Bin laden quoted in M.J. Akbar, *The Shade of Sword: Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity* (London: Routledge Press, 2002), 159.

to first understand the environment comprehensively and then to act wisely and

decisively.

Proverb 4:5   Qur'an 2.269

Get wisdom; get insight.   *…whoever is granted wisdom,*
                                                      he is indeed given a great good …

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