National Defence Défense nationale

Canadian Forces College

Collège des Forces Canadiennes

BREACHING THE GAP: THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

Maj L.C. Humphrey

JCSP 42

Exercise *Solo Flight*

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

PCEMI 42

Exercice *Solo Flight*

Avertissement

Les opinons exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

Canada

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
JCSP 42 – PCEMI 42
2015 – 2016

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

BREACHING THE GAP: THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN MILITARY OPERATIONS

Maj L.C. Humphrey

Word Count: 5172

Compte de mots: 5172

Introduction

The concepts of culture seem commonly simplistic upon initial consideration. Often times, by non-scholars, culture is banally described to its most rudimentary function: a set of behaviors by which a society operates. This definition, however, fails to outline origins and key elements of those behaviors that are arguably imperative in understanding both function and interaction with outside cultures.

Such a primitive comprehension of culture might have served as sufficient when geographical dividers limited extensive interactions, but with globalization, already elaborate cultural systems have become far more complex. Societal, political, economic, and military institutions are all subject to the missed rewards and problematic consequences earned by a deficit in understanding the intricacies of cultural awareness, but for the purposes of this paper, an emphasis will be placed on the importance of military cultural awareness.

The horrific events of September 11, 2001 punctuated the need for an advanced military cultural awareness as the post 9/11 world continued in its efforts of counterinsurgency. More light is drawn to the lack of in-depth military cultural awareness as nuclear proliferation, and its threats, spread. While measures have been taken by some militaries to increase cultural awareness, facing these and countless other continually transitioning challenges, this paper argues that military institutions should place an even greater emphasis on cultural knowledge as it pertains to an adversary, and continually revisit cultural understanding to reflect the continually shifting Current Operating Environment (COE).

This paper will attempt to substantiate this argument by first providing a better definition of culture. Subsequent to the definition of culture, the proposed origins of how culture emerged

will be discussed through an observation of hunter-gatherer tribes and agricultural societies. Following, an analysis of a few key elements and components of culture will be identified, and how their relevance impacts military consideration. Culture will then be explained as a dynamic system through the mechanisms of time-chaos theory. Cultural knowledge will then be discussed as it pertains to military strategy, operations, and tactics. Anthropological considerations will follow, and lastly lead to the application of cultural knowledge in military institutions.

Culture: A Definition

Before addressing why a military emphasis on an adversary's culture is essential, it is imperative to provide a more comprehensive definition of culture. As aforementioned, the concept of culture is one that is, by the majority of the population, considered without elaborate regard. Even amidst scholars, the definition for culture varies. Dr. John Jandora, the supervisory threat analyst at the U.S. Army Special Operations Command says culture "encompasses all aspects of life, involving beliefs, thought, customs, behavior, production, art, and institutions."[1] Orlando Patterson, a cultural and historical sociologist, defines culture as "the production, reproduction, and transmission of relatively stable information processes and their public representations, which are variously distributed in groups or social networks."[2] William D. Wunderle, a LTC of the US Army, defines culture as "a shared set of traditions, belief systems, and behaviors."[3] The US Army's FM 3-24 defines culture as "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with

[1] John W. Jandora, "Military Cultural Awareness: From Anthropology to Application." *An Institute of Land Warfare Publication*, No. 06-3 (November 2006).

[2] John Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural Sociology. (*New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010.)

[3] William D Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries. (*Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007.)

one another."[4] While differing, these definitions share appropriate representations of the deeper connotations culture implies. Since there is no holistic, concrete definition, further knowledge about culture can be derived by the examination of the history, and characteristics of culture.

Culture: Proposed Origins

Despite the lack of a concrete definition, the similarities between the aforementioned sources pinpoint key elements in cultural characteristics and components. Before exploring cultural characteristics and components, the understanding of the history of culture is imperative in comprehending how culture might have originated. This subsection of the paper will therefore attempt to provide a concise proposal of the origins of culture.

So how did culture originate? To elucidate, we will use the US Army's FM 3-24 definition of culture since it is a military organization's view of culture, and therefore, the most appropriate for the purpose of this paper. As aforementioned, the FM 3-24 states that culture is "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another."[5]

Human behavior, at its most primitive, was arguably initially dictated by basic needs and environmental conditions. Tony Bennett, a research professor in Social and Cultural Theory says that culture is historically formulated by "specific networks of relations between human and non-human actors."[6] Bennet goes on to say that, "this relation, through the distinctive assemblages that it effects, organizes and works on the social to bring out changes of conduct or

[4] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3, *Cultural and Situational Understanding. (*Washington: DA USA, 2015.)

[5] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..

[6] John Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural…*

new forms of social interactions."[7] A demonstration of this concept is reflected in hunter-gatherer societies and the advent of agriculture.

Hunter-gatherer societies, while primitive, developed culture through their interactions with the environment. Their survival was arguably dictated by competition and resource availability.[8] Because of this competition, violence emerged as a cultural component within the population.[9] This violence influenced hunter-gatherer behavior towards external, separate populations, and indubitably persuaded a methodology of behavior that would enhance the population's chances of survival. Without the complexities of more developed societies, intricate cultural characteristics did not become prevalent until the introduction of agriculture. Hypothesized to be spread by demographic growth through emigration and technological advances, agriculture provided a means for societies to become more complex.[10] Sedentism and larger populations forced new behavioral, social, and technological adaptions, and within those adaptions, value was arguably emplaced on that which promoted and provided a better, more comfortable means of survival. With time, and the increase of establishment and security, culture developed in previously abstract areas of societal interaction. Throughout history, those areas have evolved into modern characteristics and components of culture as human societies have become increasingly organized.

Culture: Characteristics and Components

With an understanding of how culture might have originated, it is now possible to highlight some characteristics and components of culture. Having addressed the "why," it seems

---

[7] Ibid.
[8] Azar Gat. *War in Human Civilization. (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.)
[9] Jean Guilaine and Jean Zammit. *The Origins of War: Violence in Prehistory. (*Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.)
[10] Azar Gat. *War in Human Civilization…*

logical to now consider the "how." The Army's FM 3-24 proposes that culture is "learned through a process called enculturation or socialization."[11] Enculturation is "the process through which the individual acquires the culture of his group, class, segment, or society."[12] Socialization is "the assimilation of the individual to the group or groups to which he is becoming a member."[13] While enculturation and socialization mechanisms are distinct in their processes, they both function instrumentally in an individual's learning of culture. This learning, by both functions, is most often propelled by social organizations.

One of the prominent social organizations responsible for the education of culture is family. "Family refers to a group of individuals of common ancestry or group that is linked by marriage."[14] More commonly, family represents the group of people an individual lives, works, and shares with in order to "satisfy basic collective needs and goals."[15] Family, therefore, indubitably plays a large role in an individual's development and understanding of culture, and the societal practices and normalcies within that culture. The direct family of an individual also enhances cultural development by injecting an individual with experiences that produce core values. As the initial source of power and authority, family is "a core institutional building block of social structure everywhere."[16] It stands to reason that while each family dynamic will vary slightly because of external and individual variables, family dynamics within the same group and cultural lens can provide military institutions keen insight into behavioral expectations and patterns.

---

[11] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..

[12] Nobuo Shimahara. "Enculturation-a Reconsideration". *Current Anthropology* Vol. 11 No. 2. [University of Chicago Press, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research]: (Apr., 1970) 143–54. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2740527.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

Another important key social organization and component of culture is religion. Religion, according the US Army's FM 3-24 is "a philosophy and way of life."[17] Religion can "define who people are, how they view the world around them, and how they interact."[18] Religion is most often implemented through shared values, beliefs, and rituals that "provide a common understanding of moral codes and proper conduct."[19] In his book "*A Manual for American Servicemen in the Arab Middle East",* Wunderle remarks upon the importance of religion within a culture as an instrument of characterization for the included populations. He says that "religion addresses not only the formal structure of religions within a culture, but also the role that religion and spirituality play in a culture."[20] For military organizations, the understanding of a society's or region's religion requires significant emphasis for the success and benefit of military operations. This understanding, however, requires flexibility. To punctuate this notion Wunderle remarks upon the Islamic religion in Middle Eastern Countries. In his book, he writes that "although not all Arabs are religious, Islam still has an overwhelming influence over almost every aspect of everyday life in the Middle East."[21] In fact, Wunderle continues by postulating that Islamic religion in the Middle East suggests "Muslims tend to see not a nation subdivided into religious groups, but a religion subdivided into nations."[22]

Divergences within a religion do occur, perhaps because much of religious doctrine or faith is faced with individualistic interpretation. Islam, for example, originally meant "a personal struggle against evil."[23] However, when faced with Western colonialism it became "a doctrine of

---

[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] William D. Wunderle, *A Manual for American Servicemen in the Arab Middle East: Using Cultural Understanding to Defeat Adversaries and Win the Peace.* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008.)
[21] William D Wunderle, *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness…*
[22] Ibid.
[23] John Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural…*

struggle against foreigners to protect the faith under Sayyid Qutb, and then a revolutionary doctrine against state oppression and foreign intervention under Ali Shariati."[24] This Islamic radicalism displays a religion's deviances and demonstrates how religion and culture can be instrumentally applied to support a group or society's values and interests. While there are differences in the quantity of weight individuals assign to religion, an understanding of religion is imperative in a military's pursuit of cultural awareness and knowledge in an area of operations. Parallel to the importance of understanding a culture's religion is the flexibility and objectivity of this knowledge's application.

To aid in the understanding of other cultures and the aforementioned cultural components, a culture's and region's history must be examined with equal consideration. The understanding of cultural history "may provide a world-view that reflects and supports the social, political, and economic organization, which can offer some guidance to the values that are likely to characterize cultures within the region."[25] While all historical avenues need to be examined, particular interest needs to be paid to war and conflicts.

Most often, populace recollection and distribution of cultural history happens through the use of narratives. Narratives are "the means through which ideologies are absorbed by members of society."[26] Cultural narratives are "stories recounted as a causally linked set of events that explains an event in a group's history and expresses the values, character, or self-identity of the group."[27] Narratives are subject to interpretation and bias by the population, as values and interests differ amongst individuals, groups, and organizations. Narratives exist in many forms, from the factual and written, to the oral memory of individuals. History for memory, arguably, is

[24] Ibid.
[25] John Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural…*
[26] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge" (*Strategic Studies Institute*, November 2007)
[27] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..

weighed with more emotion, as personal interpretation injects value and importance in past events for current consideration. In her book "*On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge,"* Jager reaffirms this notion by saying "history for memory often distorts history for contemporary purposes."[28] Thusly, a close study of history, history from memory, and narratives in needed in order to produce profitable cultural awareness in military institutions.

There are a vast number of components and elements to culture which have not been addressed by this paper, but all need to be explored and considered with care. From political to economic, every aspect of culture influences societal behavior and individualistic behavior, and thusly, strongly defines an adversary. Without proper knowledge, misinformation can prove detrimental to the success of military institutions. While more could be said about cultural elements and components, a digression must take place and address a common theme through our aforementioned considerations. The concept of culture being dynamic will be discussed in the subsequent subsection of this paper.

Culture: A Dynamical System

Thermodynamics lends to the notion of culture being dynamic by examination of the concept of time-chaos. This paper postulates that culture is a dynamical system. According to Michel Baranger, a Professor of Physics at MIT, a dynamical system is "a system whose configuration is capable of changing with time."[29] Dynamical systems consist of "variables, which are any things which can vary with time. They can be multiple or single, continuous or

[28] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…

[29] M. Baranger, "Chaos, Complexity, and Entropy : A Physics Talk for Non-Physicists" Center for Theoretical Physics, Laboratory for Nuclear Science and Department of Physics Paper, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000.) http://necsi.edu/projects/baranger/cce.pdf

discrete."[30] For the purposes of culture, variables can exist as individuals, groups, cultural elements and components, environmental factors, and ect. Because all cultural variables cannot be determined with any concrete certainty, the state of the system, which is "the complete knowledge of all the variables,"[31] cannot be achieved. Correspondingly, the phase space of a system, which is "the set of all possible values of the variables, i.e. the set of all possible states of the system,"[32] similarly cannot be determined. Due to this inability, equations of motion cannot be applied as efficiently, nor can trajectories or orbits be determined concretely. However, close approximations derived from the accruement of determined variables can provide a postulated measure of the state of a system. However, even these measures are subject to the "signature of time-chaos: sensitivity to initial conditions."[33] The initial condition "is the state of the system at some initial time."[34] Sensitivity to initial conditions says that "if you have two sets of initial conditions, or two points in phase space, extremely close to each other, the two ensuing trajectories, though close to each other at the beginning, will eventually diverge exponentially away from each other."[35] This notion, perhaps, might explain why cultures, cultural elements, and cultural components that exist within the same region have changed with the progression of time. While these changes can vary in severity and manifestation, it is impossible to negate that they do not occur. Sensitivity to initial conditions is more commonly referred to as "the butterfly effect, because thanks to the sensitivity to initial conditions, it is possible for a butterfly, by flapping it's wings on some Caribbean island today, to change completely the weather pattern in Europe a month from now."[36] If a minute variance like the beating of a butterfly's wings can

[30] M. Baranger, "Chaos, Complexity, and Entropy…
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] M. Baranger, "Chaos, Complexity, and Entropy…

hypothetically affect the meteorological system in such a fashion, the implications of personal identity as the butterfly wings in cultural systems leaves one nonplussed at the implications.

In her book, "*On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge,"* Jager says that, "culture is not unchanging, nor does it entail a set of enduring values and/or ancient "patterns" of thought from which we can predict behavior."[37] Gary Alan Fine, a Professor of Sociology, corroborates this by saying that, "because of cognitive, affective and behavioral diversity within a geographically based population, any analysis that assumes a national culture is necessarily limited and imprecise.[38]

With shifts in the COE, an adversary's culture therefore requires continual reexamination. Globalization, as an example, has transcended geographical obstacles that once largely prevented cross-cultural interactions. An aspect of this is illustrated in an article, written by Mark Poster, contained within the Handbook of Cultural Sociology. Poster describes how globalization "propelled images, sounds, and texts around the globe."[39] The phenomenon of the "Internet Galaxy,"[40] describes how the technological advances of modern times have propelled a holistic distribution of information via the internet. This cross-cultural distribution provides cultural exposure, and through exposure, developmental thought. Societal impact due to the "internet galaxy," phenomenon varies from locale to locale, and provides another variable through which culture is dynamic.

The idea of culture being dynamic is also supported in the book, "*Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence."* Moodian says that culture changes "as people from

---

[37] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…
[38] John Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural…*
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

other areas come into contact with different norms, beliefs, and values."[41] He outlines how governmental policies affected China's culture by reshaping moral beliefs with "the opening up of the country to the rest of the world in 1978."[42] While most cultural changes require significant time to root, some cultural shifts happen faster than others. Without the ability of accurate predictability, flexibility must be employed when studying the dynamics of culture by military institutions. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) highlighted the idea of culture as dynamic when developing a new methodology of operational design.

In his examination of operational design, Dalton discussed the IDF's Systemic Operational Design methodology. The Systemic Operational Design is "based on the fundamentals of systems theory and complexity theory."[43] According to Dalton, System's theory "emerged independently in a number of scientific disciplines including physics, chemistry, biology, economics and social science."[44] System's theory "takes a holistic approach in understanding individual components and the larger system they compromise."[45] This approach is accomplished by studying "interactions between elements of organization."[46] The myriad of human interactions and relations would punctuate the dynamics of culture through System's theory, and are propelled by the IDF's increasingly addressed "system in the COE: the complex adaptive system."[47]

---

[41] Michael A. Moodian. *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dynamics Within Organizations*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009.)

[42] Ibid.

[43] C.L. Dalton, "Systemic Operational Design: Epistemological Bump or the way ahead for Operational Design? A Monograph." School of Advanced Military Studies Paper, (United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2006.)

[44] Ibid.

[45] C.L. Dalton, "Systemic Operational Design…

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

Complex adaptive systems are defined by Dalton as "open systems compromised of elements that seek growth or progress through adaption. They exhibit spontaneous, self-organization, they are competitive, and they continually learn and adapt in an effort to turn situations to their advantage."[48] Complex adaptive systems are complex because they interact non-linearly through a vast number of independent elements. An understanding of Complex Adaptive systems, therefore, requires careful examination of the numerous variables, elements, and relationships, and how those interactions affect the system or systems to which they belong. If culture is filtered through the IDF's complex adaptive theory, it reiterates the idea of culture being dynamic, and emphasizes why military institutions need to continually re-examine an adversary's culture.

Cultural Knowledge for Strategy

> **…**misunderstanding culture "at a strategic level can produce policies that exacerbate an insurgency; a lack of cultural knowledge at an operation level can lead to negative public opinion; and ignorance of culture at a tactical level endangers both civilians and troops.[49] - Former HTS senior social scientist Dr. Montgomery McFater

Cultural knowledge is imperative for the development of strategy. When referencing the cumulative, aforementioned information, a lack of cultural knowledge can lead to any number of problems that hamper strategic goals. Culture, therefore, should be a priority in any strategic consideration. In her book "*On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge,"* Jager discusses how culture was prominently applied in America's post-World War II planning. In particular, the occupation of Japan (1945-52) displays how "America's cultural knowledge informed America's long-term

[48] Ibid.

[49] Thomas Johnson, and Barry Zellen. *Culture, Conflict, and Counterinsurgency.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.)

strategic objectives in Asia."[50] One could argue that this knowledge was largely identified and understood by Supreme Allied Commander of the Pacific at the time, General Douglas MacArthur. Having operated in the Pacific theatre prior to, and during, World War II, General Douglas MacArthur gained intimate knowledge of Asian culture through many avenues, but especially that of immersion. Immersion is the "experience and observation of a culture first-hand."[51] Immersion becomes more and more successful with time, as prolonged exposure provides an individual the opportunity for tangible learning with culture in day-to-day life.

After the Allied victory of World War II, General MacArthur was assigned to Japan with the task of re-stabilization and re-establishment. Operating out of Japan, General MacArthur increased his immersion into Japanese culture through interactions with all castes of society. With the accumulated knowledge immersion provided, General MacArthur made every effort to ensure Emperor Hirohito was not removed from visible power. Culture, in this instance, revealed how symbolically and religiously important Emperor Hirohito was to his country and people, so by portraying Emperor Hirohito as "an innocent Japanese victim and political symbol duped by evil Japanese militarists,"[52] a subtle push towards democracy was successfully created and propelled. Without the cultural knowledge that led to this informed manipulation, the Allied Forces' strategic aims could arguably have failed.

An example of failure due to the lack of cultural knowledge as it applies to strategy is displayed by referencing the United Nations and NATO's goal of nation building Afghanistan into a democratic society in an effort to aid regional security and stability. By doing so, the United Nations and NATO simultaneously aimed to decrease the global terrorist threat. One

[50] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…
[51] John W. Jandora, "Military Cultural Awareness: From Anthropology…
[52] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…

could argue that these strategic goals failed due to the lack of regional and cultural knowledge in Afghanistan. The implementation of a Western Government and Western policies ignored the complex systems of tribal culture, and were not successfully adopted by the vastly different societies. While an overarching, democratic government was implemented in Afghanistan, it proved ineffective in a country with an almost juxtaposed culture and history.

The United Nation's and NATO's strategic aim to decrease the global terrorist threat by nation building Afghanistan also arguably failed due to a lack of knowledge in culture that would have informed another avenue concerning proper identification of the adversary. Initially, the UN and NATO Allies targeted the Taliban in their campaign. The Taliban was targeted as a terrorist organization because of their harboring of Al Qaeda. Without proper cultural knowledge, this sanctuary was viewed, through the UN and NATO, as representation of shared beliefs and interests where they concerned the Western World. However, the refuge the Taliban was providing for Al Qaeda was later to be revealed as a product of their cultural code termed Pashtunwali. Pashtunwali "literally means the tribal honor code that has governed the Pashtun way of life for centuries."[53] Specifically, part of this code involves the concept of Melmastia. Melmastia is a term for hospitality, but differs from Western interpretation in that it "requires that any person be afforded the host's protection."[54] This protection includes that "while in the care and company of a host, a guest should neither be harmed nor surrendered to an enemy."[55] Melmastia must be "offered to all visitors without expectation of favor. Any Pashtun who can gain access to the house of another Pashtun can claim asylum there, regardless of the previous

[53] University of West Florida, "Peoples and Ethnic Groups: Pashtunwali: The Code," (Last Accessed May 2016.) http://uwf.edu/atcdev/afghanistan/people/Lesson6Pastunwali.html
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

relationship between the two parties."[56] Acting through Pashtunwali, the Taliban were arguably exercising Melmastia when harboring Al Qaeda forces. Beliefs and relationships did not have to align to allow this sanctuary. Similarly, and surprisingly, another subsection of the Pashtunwali code includes the concept of Nanawatay. Nanawatay translates to "asylum or mercy."[57] This concept can be described "as protection extended to a person who requests protection against his/her enemies even if the request for asylum and protection is sought among the enemy."[58] According to Pashtunwali, "once nanawatay is requested and granted, the requestor is protected at all costs."[59] This code, then, can demonstrably explain a reason why the Taliban harbored Al Qaeda forces. Even if the Taliban inherently disagreed with Al Qeada beliefs concerning Western Society, Pashtunwali would have compelled them to offer asylum and protection despite any conflict or differences that might have existed between them.

Without cultural knowledge of Pashtunwali, the UN and NATO Allies arguably misinterpreted the reasons for the Taliban harboring Al Qaeda forces. This misinterpretation led to an unnecessary engagement, which wasted resources, time, and lives. This oversight in cultural knowledge for the purposes of strategy also engaged another of Pashtunwali's decrees. The concept of Badal is that of revenge or justice. Badal "requires violent reaction to a death, injury, or insult."[60] This concept inarguably compelled the Taliban to retaliate for any injustices enacted upon them by coalition forces. This view of the Taliban could arguably have been missed due to the religious lens the coalition might have interpreted their society through. While the Taliban are included within the Muslim faith, Pashtunwali "often contradicts the Qur'an."[61]

---

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] University of West Florida, "Peoples and Ethnic Groups: Pashtunwali…
[61] Ibid.

Pashtunwali code punctuates the need for cultural knowledge in military strategy, and also demonstrates how integral culture is to an understanding of society, and especially, an adversary.

Cultural Knowledge for Operations and Tactics

Cultural knowledge at operational and tactical levels differs from the kinds of cultural knowledge needed for strategy. While all cultural knowledge inarguably aids strategy, operations, and tactics, cultural knowledge as "applied to the level of operations and tactics is concerned with the practical application of this knowledge on the battlefield."[62] A thorough understanding of regional culture can greatly facilitate operating within the COE by providing insight into things like common customs and behaviors. Jager, in her book "*On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge,"* supports this by saying that culture at the operational and tactical levels "is defined as a more or less stable and static set of categories that include distinct belief-systems, values, customs, and traditions that can then be applied to enhance the cultural awareness of forces on the ground."[63] This operational and tactical need for cultural knowledge influenced the creation of the Human Terrain System (HTS) by the Foreign Military Studies Office, which is a U.S. training and Doctrine Command organization that supports the combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. George Lucas, a Professor of Philosophy at the United States Naval Academy, provides this description of the Human Terrain System:

> In its broadest sense, military anthropology covers a variety of distinct activities, including, perhaps most dramatically, embedding anthropologists with military troops in combat zones where they assist military personnel on site with advice and consultation regarding strategic features of the local and regional culture.

[62] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…
[63] Ibid.

> Training and deploying these teams constitutes what the U.S. Army terms its Human Terrain Systems.[64]

The Human Terrain system constitutes seven components for achieving the objectives for which it was designed. These components are Human Terrain Teams (HTT), reach-back research cells, subject-matter expert-networks, a tool kit, techniques, human terrain information, and specialized training. In her study, Jager says this about how the components are utilized to achieve the Human Terrain System's objectives:

> Each HTT will be comprised of experienced cultural advisors familiar with the area in which the commander will be operating. The experts on the ground, these advisors will be in direct support of a brigade commander. All will have experience in organizing and conducting ethnographic research in a specific area of responsibility, and they will work in conjunction with the other social science researchers. HTT will be embedded in brigade combat teams, providing commanders with an organic ability to gather, process, and interpret relevant cultural data. In addition to maintaining the brigade's cultural data bases by gathering and updating data, HTTs will also conduct specific information research and analysis as tasked by the brigade commander.[65]

The Human Terrain System visibly facilitates the concept of culture as a dynamical system, and also directly addresses the need for constant re-examination of culture while operating in the COE.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan emphasized the need for cultural knowledge to such an extent that another product was produced alongside the Human Terrain System to enhance the need for military cultural understanding. The U.S. Army FM 3-24 is a counterinsurgency manual that "highlights cultural knowledge and human relationships as central aspects for

---

[64] George R. Lucas. *Anthropologists in Arms: The Ethics of Military Anthropology*. (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2009.)

[65] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…

waging a successful counterinsurgency."[66] The FM 3-24 dissects the concept and elements of cultural knowledge, and "links the basics to methodologies and training tools to more rapidly gain cultural understanding through a deliberate process, rather than simply gaining awareness through learned patterns."[67] While the FM 3-24 received, "rave reviews from the *New York Times*,"[68] the manual also birthed "profound moral and ethical questions,"[69] particularly in the Anthropological community.

The Anthropological Debate

America's Human Terrain System and the FM 3-24 are both examples of America's implementation of military anthropology. While military anthropology doubtlessly aids military institutions in their goals and interests, the use of military anthropology has been heavily debated by the Anthropological community. The Human Terrain System, in particular sparked heated discussions. Anthropologist Roberto Gonzalez and Anthropologist David Price were both passionate critics of the HTS, in 2007 saying:

> The Pentagon is increasingly relying on the deployment of "Human Terrain System" (HTS) teams in Afghanistan and Iraq to gather and disseminate on cultures living in the theatre of war. Some of these teams are assigned to US brigades or regimental combat units, which include "cultural analysts" and "regional studies analysts." …Although proponents of this form of applied anthropology claim that culturally informed counter-insurgency work will save lives and win "hearts and minds," they have thus far not attempted to provide any evidence of this…If anthropologists on HTS teams interview Afghans or Iraqis about the intimate details of their lives, what is to prevent combat teams from using the same date to one day "neutralize" suspected insurgents? What would impede the transfer of data collected by social scientist to commanders planning offensive military campaigns? Where is the line that separates the professional

[66] Ibid.
[67] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..
[68] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…
[69] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..

anthropologist from the counter-insurgency technician?"[70] –Price and Gonzales 2007

While Price and Gonzales have not been able to produce evidence that such violations are transpiring, they nonetheless stand in opposition of collaboration between the military and anthropologists, despite the "acknowledgement that there are positive examples of cooperation from the past."[71] The book *Practicing Military Anthropology* proposes that anthropological disapproval of military and anthropological collaboration stems from three points. The first identifies "the tensions between anthropologist's professional roles and their roles as citizens."[72] The second addresses the "harm that might befall the people among whom anthropologists studied as a result of anthropological cooperation with the military."[73] The third highlights the dichotomy "between the benefits and harms that might come to the discipline as a result of that collaboration."[74] While there is validity to these concerns, other anthropologists refute these criticisms. One such anthropologist is Montgomery McFate. McFate believes that "promoting more nuanced cultural awareness and sensitivity for the average soldier, sailor, or Marine through HTS will actually help save lives and avoid needless casualties, even while assisting in the war on terror."[75]

Support for military anthropological advancement is especially evident in those who have worked with military institutions. Dr. David Kilcullen, an Australian national with a Ph.D. in political anthropology, served as an officer in the Australian National Defense Force. Through

[70] George R. Lucas. *Anthropologists in Arms…*
[71] George R. Lucas. *Anthropologists in Arms…*
[72] Robert Rubinstein, Kerry Fosher, and Clementine Fujimura. *Practicing Military Anthropology: Beyond Expectations and Traditional Boundaries.* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2013.)
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] George R. Lucas. *Anthropologists in Arms…*

first hand experiences Kilcullen emphasized "that a working knowledge of cultural specifics by commanders in the field goes far toward defusing hostilities and preventing needless casualties."[76] However, even with such first-hand support, the anthropological community treated "any anthropologist who worked with the military, and many who studied aspects of military communities, as though they provided combat support."[77] Anthropologist Marcus B. Griffin, who worked directly within the Human Terrain System, addressed this connotation in his essay "Notes from the Field," closing with:

> I hope that this essay will encourage readers to help find solutions to the conflict in Iraq (and elsewhere), rather than treating HTS as some kind of whipping child for their anxiety about U.S. forces being in Iraq and U.S. foreign policy in general. Iraq is a truly wonderful place with wonderful people so deserving of freedom and a chance at prosperity. In my experience, the U.S. Army's HTS is directly helping to resolve conflict and create a space for prosperity and freedom to take hold in Iraq."[78]
>
> – Marcus B. Griffin

While ethical concerns over the collaborative efforts between anthropologists and military organizations purport rational trepidations, such collaborations should not be categorized with ominous intention or be imbued with implied abuse. If practiced and utilized responsibly, the insight anthropologists can provide military institutions would prove invaluable. To accomplish such a goal, author George Lucas proposes how this collaboration might be accomplished to satisfy both military and anthropological needs.

> The rubric of HTS does not unequivocally support the general disapproval of it. Instead, it reveals new and different problems that demonstrate an urgent need for a method of review and redress that I believe the profession itself must finally

[76] Ibid.
[77] Robert Rubinstein, Kerry Fosher, and Clementine Fujimura. *Practicing Military Anthropology…*
[78] J. Kelly, B. Jauregui, S. Mitchell, and J. Walton. *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.)

> adopt. I call that method or approach "anthropologists without borders," and liken it to the international organization of physicians that provide medical care in desolate and desperate areas of the world, without presuming to pass judgement on the wider issues that generate the deep human need to which their organization's members provide merciful response. I think, finally, that anthropologists may need to do something similar: to make their expertise available without being beholden to, or sitting in judgement of, any of the parties to the conflicts that generate the human suffering that only they can help alleviate. In procedure and practice, the case made for such anthropological intervention in particular zones of conflict will, in turn, require evaluation and review by something equivalent to an anthropologically oriented institutional review board, in which a diverse jury of peers (perhaps not limited solely to anthropologists) reviews requests for assistance (such as HTS specifics), or job offers, or any other specific proposal to employ anthropological expertise, in order to assure that such proposals meet the requirements of the AAA Code of Ethics, and conform as well to the broader mandates of moral justification.[79]
>
> –George R. Lucas, Jr.

So how can ethical, cultural knowledge be gained and utilized by military institutions? The subsequent section of this paper will address some means by which cultural knowledge can be gained and applied, and the problems with the integration of these applications as faced by military institutions.

Application of Cultural Knowledge

This paper has thus far emphasized the need for culture as it effects military institutions, but cultural knowledge, in itself, is a holistic demand. The military, while compromised of former civilians, exists as its own multi-system organization, and therefore is imbued with its own culture. While the military's function is that of protecting the interests and security of its respective nation, civilians have little cultural knowledge of the military systems and individuals, and arguably derive many of their opinions from media sources. Proper cultural understanding of military organizations and systems through education should be thusly emphasized, and could

[79] George R. Lucas. *Anthropologists in Arms…*

arguably lead to greater support by the population and a "national consensus."[80] In this regard, noticing the absence of civilian cultural knowledge is an exercise in how cultural knowledge can aid military strategy.

However, the application of cultural knowledge presents its own hurdles. While cultural immersion facilitates the development of cultural knowledge, immersion is impractical because of the related issues of where, who, and how much.[81] Cultural knowledge for military application is best achieved through cultural education, cultural training, and situational understanding.

Cultural Education is "the step that focuses on what defines a culture."[82] Investigating the myriad of components and elements that constitute a culture will allow military institutions to pursue cultural training, and develop situational understanding. Cultural training "is designed to build on cultural education, and uses educational tools to help units and personnel apply cultural information about the theatre of operations."[83] With specific training, the application of cultural knowledge can now serve in situational understanding. If cultural knowledge and understanding can help inform regional behavior, the knowledge and understanding can then propel situational awareness at tactical and operational levels by indicating when "something is out of place."[84] Cultural education, training, and situational understanding inarguably prepares and validates soldier expectations, making personnel more adept in functionality while mitigating the risks associated with culture shock.

---

[80] Sheila M. Jager, "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge…
[81] John W. Jandora, "Military Cultural Awareness: From Anthropology…
[82] Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3,..
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

While these methodologies of applying cultural knowledge take place within the military organizations themselves, it is imperative that individual military personnel simultaneously pursue cultural knowledge and education on their own. While further incorporating cultural knowledge into military doctrine is necessary, an individual desire to learn will facilitate the military organization's overall strategy.

Conclusion

Globalization has heavily impacted the already dynamic state of culture. Through a thorough understanding of what culture is, how it might have originated, and some of its key elements, an argument for the increased emphasis on the cultural awareness of an adversary argued by this paper is supported. Through an examination of time-chaos theory and a discussion of culture acts a dynamical system, the argument for the re-visitation of cultural understanding to reflect the continually shifting COE is substantiated. By discussing cultural knowledge as it pertains to strategy, operations, and tactics a proposed application has been offered through an examination of the anthropological community's concerns. In conclusion, with ethical care, military institutions should place an even greater emphasis on cultural knowledge as it pertains to an adversary, and continually revisit cultural understanding to reflect the continually shifting Current Operating Environment.

Bibliography

Norton, T.A.D. "Developing Cultural Awareness in the CAF: A Road map" Joint Command and Staff Programme Solo Flight, Canadian Forces College, 2015.

Jandora, John W. "Military Cultural Awareness: From Anthropology to Application." *An Institute of Land Warfare Publication,* No. 06-3 (November 2006)

Hall, John, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, *Handbook of Cultural Sociology.* New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010.

Jager, Sheila M. "On the Uses of Cultural Knowledge" *Strategic Studies Institute*, (November 2007)

Wunderle, William D. *Through the Lens of Cultural Awareness: A Primer for US Armed Forces Deploying to Arab and Middle Eastern Countries.* Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007.

Moodian, Michael A. *Contemporary Leadership and Intercultural Competence: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dynamics Within Organizations.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009.

United States of America. Headquarters, Department of the Army. ATP 3-24.3, *Cultural and Situational Understanding.* Washington: Department of the Army, 2015.

McChrystal, Stanley A. "It Takes a Network: The New Front Line of Modern Warfare." The FP Group Magazine. (February 2011) http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/02/21/it-takes-a-network/

Baranger, M. "Chaos, Complexity, and Entropy : A Physics Talk for Non-Physicists" Center for Theoretical Physics, Laboratory for Nuclear Science and Department of Physics Paper, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000. http://necsi.edu/projects/baranger/cce.pdf

Guilaine, Jean and Jean Zammit. *The Origins of War: Violence in Prehistory.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Gat, Azar. *War in Human Civilization.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Shimahara, Nobuo. "Enculturation-a Reconsideration". *Current Anthropology* Vol. 11 No. 2. [University of Chicago Press, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research]: (Apr., 1970) 143–54. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2740527.

Wunderle, William D. *A Manual for American Servicemen in the Arab Middle East: Using Cultural Understanding to Defeat Adversaries and Win the Peace.* New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008.

Dalton, C.L. "Systemic Operational Design: Epistemological Bump or the way ahead for Operational Design? A Monograph." School of Advanced Military Studies Paper, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2006.

Lucas, George R. *Anthropologists in Arms: The Ethics of Military Anthropology.* Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2009.

Johnson, Thomas, and Barry Zellen. *Culture, Conflict, and Counterinsurgency.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

University of West Florida, "Peoples and Ethnic Groups: Pashtunwali: The Code," Last Accessed May 2016. http://uwf.edu/atcdev/afghanistan/people/Lesson6Pastunwali.html

Rubinstein, Robert, Kerry Fosher, and Clementine Fujimura. *Practicing Military Anthropology: Beyond Expectations and Traditional Boundaries.* Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2013.

Kelly, J., B. Jauregui, S. Mitchell, and J. Walton. *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Milligan, M.R.A. "Stereotypes in Western – Islamic Relations: A Source of Instability" Joint Command and Staff Programme New Horizons, Canadian Forces College, 1997.

Canada. Canadian Forces Warfare Centre. CFJP 3.0, *Operations.* Ottawa: Joint Doctrine Branch, 2010.