ENTANGLEMENTS

THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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THE CANSOFCOM EDUCATION & RESEARCH CENTRE

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FOREWORD

Initially, I wish to announce that as a result of an internal Command structural review, the Professional Development Centre (PDC) has been formerly renamed the Education and Research Centre (ERC) and has moved from the Command Headquarters to the Canadian Special Operations Training Centre (CSOTC). Notably, our commitment to our monograph program has not changed. As such, I am delighted to introduce our most recent monograph, *Entanglements: The Importance of Cross-Cultural Competence for Special Operations Forces*. In this volume, anthropologist Jessica Glicken Turnley underscores the importance of cultural competence to success in the contemporary operating environment. Arguably, in light of the growing understanding, if not forced realization, of the human terrain and its fundamental importance to succeeding in the contemporary operating environment, this competence is of particular importance for special operations forces. Additionally, its importance is likely to do nothing but increase in the foreseeable future. As such, *Entanglements* is a topical and relevant addition to our series.

As always, the intent of the PDC/ERC monograph series is to provide interesting professional development material that will assist individuals in the Command, as well as those external to it, to learn more about human behaviour, special operations, and military theory and practice. I hope you find this publication informative and of value to your operational role. In addition, it is intended to spark discussion, reflection and debate. Please do not hesitate to contact the ERC should you have comments or topics that you would like to see addressed as part of the CANSOFCOM Monograph Series.

Dr. Emily Spencer
Series Editor and CANSOFCOM ERC Director of Education & Research

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The growing prevalence of hostile non-state actors such as the Taliban and al Shabaab, and of hostile quasi-states such as the so-called Islamic State, have called for increased use of special operations forces (SOF) for unconventional warfare, irregular warfare, and counter-insurgency activities. SOF's increased profile has highlighted the need for the development and use of a capability critical to their success: cross-cultural competence.

Prosecution of irregular warfare (IW) and related activities for which SOF are uniquely suited benefit significantly from engagement by operators with members of a population local to conflict areas, many from cultural traditions far different than their own. Further complicating the picture, engagements in this type of warfare have become overtly couched in 'whole of government' approaches and language that require military personnel to engage openly and actively with diplomats, foreign aid workers, and others who may have very different perspectives than the military or SOF on conflict and paths to resolution.

In this context, there are many ways in which indigenous personnel may engage in the battlespace. Traditional models of warfare describe their engagement only through participation in state-sponsored militaries. Counter-insurgency constructs show the formation of local militias or the recruitment of local personnel by foreign fighters to challenge state regimes. More complex models, such as those currently emerging in the Middle East with the rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS), see the emergence of quasi-state militias composed of combinations of fighters recruited locally, from neighboring areas, and from abroad, challenging states and their allies and, in some cases, the system of states itself.

Moreover, most Western governments, including the U.S. and Canada, have developed what are called whole-of-government approaches to countering complicated emerging threats. In some cases, they are formalized with whole new languages developed to discuss approaches that had, of course, always been an integral part of warfighting. The formalization and incorporation of this language into strategic and operational conversations means that engagement by the military with their counterparts in other agencies and from other sectors (such as non-governmental aid organizations) becomes much more visible and accountable.

These cross-cultural entanglements, with indigenous personnel, and with other 'blue' or friendly, supporting sectors in a common effort, are non-trivial in nature and require an understanding of the perspective and world view of those 'others' to succeed. This is the domain of cross-cultural competence – the ability to understand and constructively engage with communities which behave in terms of different values, attitudes and world views. This process is more than the acquisition of knowledge about a region or the development of proficiency in a foreign language, although this type of knowledge and capability is useful.

Cross-cultural competence involves the ability to mobilize regional, linguistic, and other knowledge in order to execute a task or achieve a goal. It requires motivation – an understanding of the importance of cross-cultural engagement in mission or task achievement, and an associated willingness to acquire and demonstrate the competence. It is based on personality characteristics that, among other things, keep an individual open to new experiences and invest him/her with a tolerance for ambiguity. It also involves learning to think differently, to acquire and exercise an understanding of the complexity, depth and motivational power of alternative perspectives.

Doctrinally, the inclusion of the local population in the battlespace and the adoption of a whole-of-government approach means a formal recognition of the need to understand how a local population 'works,' and of the missions and values of other governmental and non-governmental structures. The first section of this monograph illustrates how this is happening in American military doctrine and its application for SOF. Operationally and tactically, inclusion of the local population in the battlespace and the need to engage with other blue sectors means that the military toolkit needs to expand from the traditional kinetic arsenal to include non-kinetic tools directed at developing constructive engagements. One of these tools is cross-cultural competence. The military needs to field operators who are able to effectively engage with local populations, and with other governmental and non-governmental sectors. Analytically, the inclusion of these domains in the operating space means that new military paradigms need to be developed to describe engagement with the complex dynamics of the interactions at play among the many players in a society in conflict, including the home society. Analysts and operators need to have a deeper understanding of the concept of culture and its behavioural manifestations and imperatives than they do in force-on-force warfare. This paradigm means that, from an education and training standpoint, members of the military need to be better equipped to understand others, and in ways to use that understanding to achieve military and political ends.

Barak Salomi and Paula Holmes-Eber, writing on culture for the U.S. Marine Corps, describe what they call "operational culture," which they define as "Those aspects of culture that influence the outcome of a military operation; conversely, the military actions that influence the culture of an area of operations."[1] This discussion takes the educational requirement a bit deeper. The operator needs to understand how to think about culture, how to 'know it when he sees it,' and then know what to do about it. Culture,

we argue, is in the perception first and the action it drives second. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz put it when discussing the different meanings applied to the contraction of an eyelid – an involuntary twitch, a deliberate wink, a parody of the twitch, and a focused rehearsal of the wink/twitch – it is not the observed behaviour, the contracting of the eyelids, that is of interest, but the "socially established structures of meaning in terms of which people do such things as signal conspiracies and join them or perceive insults and answer them."[2] As Geertz points out, the:

> movements are, as movements, identical; from an I-am-a-camera, "phenomenalistic" observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and a wink is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows.[3]

The absence of cross-cultural competence in an environment which requires significant engagement with a population with different structures of meaning could, indeed, lead to a twitch being taken for a wink and action taken that should best have been avoided, or a wink taken for a twitch and an opportunity for collusion lost. What is important is that:

> …between … the "thin description" of what the rehearser (parodist, winker, twitcher . . .) is doing ("rapidly contracting his right eyelids") and the "thick description" of what he is doing ("practicing a burlesque of a friend faking a wink to deceive an innocent into thinking a conspiracy is in motion") lies…a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake-winks, parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted, and without which they would not…

in fact exist, no matter what anyone did or didn't do with his eyelids.[4]

Cross-cultural competence is the ability first to recognize those structures of meaning, to know that contraction of an eyelid could signal a conspiracy, and then to act on that knowledge, to choose a response. Cross-cultural competence thus provides the opportunity for informed engagement with others.

Entitlements begins with the argument for heightened need for cross-cultural competence for SOF today. It uses a description of the history of IW to highlight the importance of a deep understanding of local logics or cultures for the prosecution of this type of war and so for SOF who are the force of choice for this type of war. The development of American doctrine on counter-insurgency provides a useful example. This discussion leads to an explication of the concept of cross-cultural competency, including a discussion of which parts of it are innate (personality traits) and which are learned. The third section focuses on the development of a cross-cultural perspective. It provides some constructs that can help develop the ability to provide 'thick descriptions,' to develop the critical thinking necessary to recognize and so effectively engage with the perspectives of others, whether they are indigenous populations in a battlespace, or colleagues and counterparts in a planning meeting at home. The discussion concludes with some specific suggestions to prepare the operator to effectively engage with 'others' of all kinds who are a critical part of an irregular warfare environment.

> *Doctrine provides a military organization with a common philosophy, a common language, a common purpose, and a unity of effort.*
>
> *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States (JP-1)*[5]

An old way of warfighting made new

New American doctrine on irregular warfare and associated counter-insurgency activities emerged from the protracted campaigns to address the threats that the U.S. faced – and is still facing – in Afghanistan and Iraq. These campaigns led to the development of a set of doctrines on IW and counter-insurgency (COIN) that significantly expanded the use of SOF and emphasized the importance of a deep understanding of the motivations and values of the population that is local to the conflict area and of partners in a whole-of-government approach. Cross-cultural competence – the ability to understand and constructively exploit local logics of participation and engagement – was one of the key skills highlighted in the doctrine and associated documents outlining the 'new' type of warfare the U.S. faced.

Notably, however, irregular warfare is not new. It has been practiced by militaries for centuries. However, until recently, it has not been the centrepiece of war planning or warfighting for modern militaries. In fact, until recently, many countries have not formally recognized irregular warfare and its required resources, such as SOF, as part of the military's suite of tools.

Traditional and irregular warfighting

The 'traditional' Western way of warfare, based on Clausewitz, assumes a Westphalian state system with state-run militaries. Warfare is characterized as violent struggle between the states. Supporting this position, traditional warfare, according to American doctrine:

> generally assumes that the majority of people indigenous to the operational area are not belligerents and will be subject to whatever political outcome is imposed,

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arbitrated, or negotiated. A fundamental military objective is to minimize civilian interference in military operations.[6]

Military operations are focused on an adversary's state-sponsored armed forces, with the ultimate goal of influencing the government. Planning scenarios, characterized as 'force-on-force' scenarios, use manoeuvre and firepower in battlespaces empty of civilians.

Since the 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks on the United States, military planning scenarios have increasingly incorporated IW approaches as well. In an IW planning scenario:

warfare is characterized as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). This form is labeled as irregular in order to highlight its non-Westphalian context. The strategic point of IW is to gain or maintain control or influence over, and the support of, a relevant population.[7]

The key difference in the definitions between traditional warfare and irregular warfare is both the inclusion of, and often the focus on, the local population in the battlespace in IW. The planning space is no longer empty of civilians or indigenous personnel. In fact, local civilians (or non-military personnel) may become the focus of the military planning effort, and the local state-sponsored military and the state itself either rendered irrelevant or relegated to a secondary position.

Although the Westphalian nation-state that has formed the basis of the geopolitical community for centuries is not dead, its role as an actor on the world stage has shifted in the last few decades. It now shares part of centre stage with non-state actors who seek to replace a state government or who (as in the case of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State) seek to render the state

system itself irrelevant and replace it with governance systems based on other principles. As these non-state actors draw heavily on portions of the population outside the military for recruits, resources, and support, state-based militaries must include these same populations in their planning calculus. This process has led to the often-referenced redrawing of the Clausewitzian triangle that appeared in the first version of the Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept (IW JOC) (See Figure 1. Note that the bottom two vertices are not labeled 'military' and 'civilians,' but 'military' and 'population.' The primary identity that groups like the Taliban needed to challenge for successful recruiting, for example, was not one of identity with the state (civilian) but one of investment in a construct of religious beliefs.)
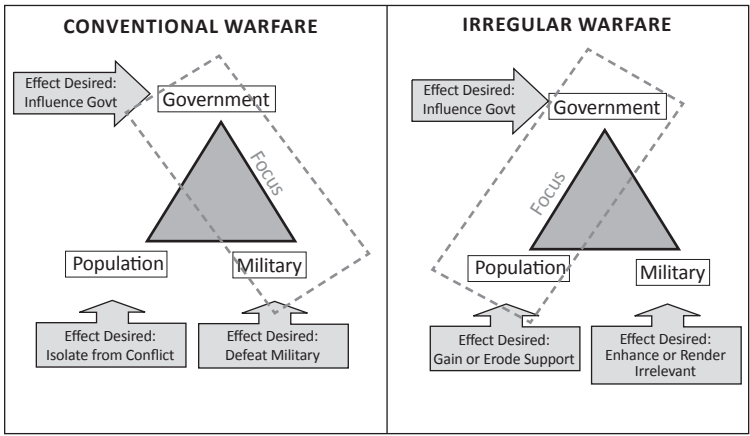
FIGURE 1: Contrasting conventional (traditional) and irregular warfare[8]

For the discussion here, the importance of the shift from a focus primarily on traditional warfare to one where militaries must prepare primarily for irregular warfare lies in the increased emphasis that shift places both on the use of SOF and on the importance of understanding and being able to effectively entangle with other communities. This shift requires new ways of thinking, as well as of doing. American doctrine also points out that:

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> Warfare that has the population as its focus of operations requires a different mindset and different capabilities than warfare that focuses on defeating an adversary militarily. In COIN operations this means an adaptive and flexible mindset to understand the population, anticipate insurgent actions, be comfortable among the population, and appreciate the comprehensive approach of unified action.[9]

COIN is a type of IW, and American COIN doctrine directly supports the IW objective: "[t]he primary objective of any COIN operation is to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government."[10] Since legitimacy depends upon a voluntary (i.e. un-coerced or unrewarded) act of submission to a regime[11] based on the population's recognition of the regime's moral authority, the focus of this type of IW is not on control of territory or assets or the exercise of power, but on the 'minds' of the population. As American doctrine, JP-1, puts it, "The strategic point of IW is to gain or maintain control or influence over, and the support of, a relevant population."[12] The IW JOC version 2.0 argues that a rich understanding of the sociocultural environment is a key ingredient for success in IW activities such as COIN: "In order to maximize the prospect of success, the joint force must understand the population and operating environment, including the complex historical, political, socio-cultural, religious, economic and other causes of violent conflict."[13]

Being irregular in Africa

The tension between traditional and irregular warfare has been an issue for Western militaries since Clausewitz published *On War* in 1832. A mere eight years after its publication, a Prussian general by the name of Major General Carl von Decker traveled to Algeria and noted that:

The essential elements of European warfare were missing in Algeria: there were no enemy positions that could be attacked, no fortifications, no operationally relevant locations, no strategic deployments, no classical lines of communication, no adversarial army, no decisive battles – there was even 'no center of gravity…The finest gimmicks of our newest theoreticians of war lose their magic power [in Africa].[14]

To address this problem, Thomas Robert Bugeaud, Governor-General for the French in Algeria from 1840-1846, established an 'Arab Bureau' (*Bureaux Arabes*). He believed that:

the officers in charge … must understand and speak the idiom of the indigenous people and they have to acquire a profound knowledge of the country through the study of established costumes *(sic),* the laws in force, etc. . . . The active and intelligent surveillance of indigenous leaders is a delicate task, reserved for the officer in charge of Arab affairs. To make it a success, he should not hesitate by any means to put himself often among the populations: visit the markets, the tribes, and listen to the locals' complaints.[15]

Douglas Porch speaks of a French 'colonial school of warfare' initiated by Bugeaud and further developed by African military leaders such as Joseph Galliéni who served as Governor in Madagascar from 1896-1905 and Louis Hubert Lyautey, the first French Resident-General in Morocco, who served there from 1912-1925. Porch's description of the French colonial school of warfare reads rather like a description of modern special operations:

The colorful, Africanized uniforms adopted by many solders in Algeria simply offered the most visible evidence of their commitment to adapt, chameleon-like, to their

new environment…French soldiers…adopted not only the dress but also the tactics they encountered in Africa… Campaigning over barren and remote areas, against an often-elusive foe, French soldiers were forced to abandon methods of fighting suitable to Europe. Mobility, small-unit operations, and surprise became more important in Africa than weight of numbers and conventional logistics.[16]

Interestingly, Thomas Rid points out that Lyautey preferred older and more experienced men to man his *Service des Affaires Indigènes* in Morocco[17] (an incarnation of the *Bureaux Arabes* Bugeaud established in Algeria) – perhaps an early prefiguring of the American Special Forces (or Green Berets, an Army special operations component) requirement that applicants have prior military experience.[18] And Porch noted that these French soldiers fighting in Africa felt disenfranchised (*dépaysement*) by the mainstream French military for their unorthodox tactics,[19] much as American special operators had felt sidelined by their services until the establishment of USSOCOM in 1987 and its movement to centre stage after 9/11.

The French colonial school of warfare developed by Bugeaud, Galliéni, and Lyautey depended upon deep knowledge of local populations. Among other tactics, Galliéni's oil spot (*tache d'huile*) strategy, adopted by GEN Petraeus in Afghanistan as described in an interview on NBC's *Meet the Press* on 15 August 2010, required that one "must execute a 'combination of political action with military action' and 'enter into intimate contact with the populations, exploring their tendencies, their mentality, and striving to satisfy their needs in order to attach them through persuasion to the new institutions.'"[20]

David Galula brought many of the concepts of the French colonial school of warfare to the English-speaking world. As a Frenchman,

he had served in East and Southeast Asia in the 1940s and 1950s, and in North Africa during the Algerian War in 1956-1958. In 1964 he published, in English, C*ounterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*,[21] which drew upon his experience and history in North Africa. The preface to the highly influential FM 3-24, the American COIN doctrine published in 2006 which shaped much of American action in Afghanistan and Iraq, stated that Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare* was the most influential book used in its writing.[22]

Irregular becomes 'regular'

The emergence of a new type of threat to the organized state and its shaping of the strategic environment in favour of irregular warfare has led to a significant growth in both the number of special operations forces and their influence in the battlespace. Authorized special operations forces positions in the American military, for example, grew by about 47 per cent from 2001-2014.[23] (That said, it is still worth keeping SOF in perspective: special operations forces still represent only about 3 per cent of the U.S. military services' total force levels, and SOF-specific funding, excluding what the services spend to support their SOF components, is about 1.5 per cent of the total defence budget. If estimates of what the services provide are added, the total is still just under 3 per cent of the total American defence budget.[24]) One of the key capabilities SOF bring to the table is their ability to see the world differently than traditional military personnel in the execution of their game-changing military tactics. As Admiral Eric Olson, the former Commander of USSOCOM said, "The value of adaptive special operations forces is at least as much in their mindset as in their skill set."[25]

Today's threats engage and mobilize to violence non-military personnel on a scale not seen recently in global geopolitics. This

mobilization has required a rethinking on the part of state-run militaries of approaches and mechanisms to counter that threat. The biggest shift required was a conceptual shift, one that re-populated the battlespace with indigenous peoples. In fact, the shift was paradigmatic on some levels, reconceptualizing the target of strategies as the people rather than the state as represented through its military.

American doctrine recognizes the shift at the nation-state level from a full focus on classic, Clausewitzian battlespace to something quite different as a shift in emphasis, not as the introduction of a replacement. In its discussion of the distinction between tradi-tional and irregular warfare, JP-1, the *Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States,* points out that "most US operations since the 11 September 2001 attacks have been irregular; this caused the problem of calling irregular or nontraditional what we do rou-tinely."[26] However, it goes on to say that "The forms of warfare are applied not in terms of an 'either/or' choice, but in various combi-nations to suit a combatant's strategy and capabilities."[27]

Such a reconceptualization required a rethinking of required resources and strategies. SOF have risen to prominence in the planning and execution of many strategic dimensions of the new security environment. And one of the key requirements put upon operators is their ability to effectively and productively engage with the 'prize' of irregular warfare, the people, and with a host of other non-military communities. And it is here that cross-cultural competence comes into play.

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
         Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat…

The Ballad of East and West
Rudyard Kipling

Cross-cultural competence

The intimate entanglement with the world view of others required for SOF operators in a military world increasing defined by 'irregular' encounters takes us to an exploration of cross-cultural or intercultural competence and effectiveness. Cross-cultural competence is the ability to engage effectively with communities that behave in terms of different values, attitudes, and world views. While this requires a recognition of difference, effective cross-cultural engagement often begins with the discovery of a commonality, a point of connection. This section will discuss the innate and learned dimensions of the competency, and point out the difference between regional knowledge and a more general, cross-cultural perspective.

Rudyard Kipling's poem, *The Ballad of East and West*[28] is often used as a declaration of the gulf between cultures, between worlds so different they ultimately must lead to what Huntington so famously called the 'clash of civilizations.'[29]

> Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
> Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;

However, the next lines of the poem are:

> But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

The poem goes on to describe the encounter of two men originating in very different communities who discovered a commonality on the battlefield and, as a consequence, were able to meaningfully

engage and completely redefine the nature of the ways in which they were entangled.

While an understanding of others can begin from afar, through classroom work, engagement with regional experts, and readings and discussions, we can only truly understand other logics by engaging with them, in Kipling's words, "stand[ing] face to face." It is only then that we can experience the disjuncture, the jolt, when 'they' act in ways we do not understand or expect, and exercise the ability to overcome the discomfort that causes, and search for and exploit points of connection.

Entangling with local logics

Local logics are local systems of meaning that help participants successfully negotiate the stream of experience that results from their interaction with others. They represent a sensemaking capability, the ability to create and see order and meaning in behaviour. As Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld point out,

> To focus on sensemaking is to portray organizing as the experience of being thrown into an ongoing, unknowable, unpredictable streaming of experience in search of answers to the question, "what's the story?" Plausible stories animate and gain their validity from subsequent activity.[30]

This example raises several key points. We move through the world picking and choosing from all possible experience only that which we deem relevant. We order, or structure, the bits of experience we select into a story, a narrative, which is validated by others with whom we come into contact. It thus is a social activity, one that requires interaction with and feedback from others. This activity is reflexive: the stories or narratives created by the information we select become confirmed by others and then tell us

which information is important as we move forward in time. The stories themselves become the way we understand experience. These stories, these structures of relevancy or meaning, are the 'narratives' that have become the focus of much analytic activity in national security communities in recent years.

Although a cross-cultural approach lends itself strongly to a focus on others, let us not forget that we too have our 'local logics' which we bring into any engagement. 'Our logics' are American or Canadian logics, the logics of the hometown experiences of the soldiers now in theater, logics created by their religious beliefs and practices, their ethnic heritages, the values and attitudes of their particular military service and unit, and so on. The same holds true in engagements with non-military sectors. The prosecution of IW means managing entanglements with the organizational logics of the military, the diplomatic corps, aid organization, and the like.

This highly complex conceptual space that is 'us' thus intersects with logics we find locally. These are logics and structures of meaning created by communities of people who have interacted violently and non-violently for generations if not millennia. They include the logics of national governments populated with a cadre of western-educated bureaucrats, of clan and kin structures that guide day-to-day interactions, of 'foreign fighters' with religious, personal, and political agendas, of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and formal government agencies.

So 'understanding the population' means understanding ourselves as well as understanding 'them,' for we, too, are key players in the battlespace and influence others through our presence and our actions. 'They' are changed through their interaction with 'us.' And to further complicate the matter, any effort to understand a community through engagement or, conversely, to engage with a community because of something learned through an effort at

understanding, changes both 'us' and 'them.' In theory, we cannot truly understand an 'other' because the very act of engaging required to achieve that understanding, changes that which we are trying to understand.

Underlying all these logics of meaning are the very real physical consequences of improvised explosive devices (IED) detonations, direct fire attacks, kidnappings, arrests, and the like. And in between it all, people are getting married, raising children, and farming their fields. How, then, do we understand the connections between these systems of meanings, these logics, and the physical acts and behaviours they drive? How do we figure out what will happen when we give money, build a school, arrest a suspected terrorist, detonate an IED or conduct cordon-and-knocks or an information campaign in a neighborhood? As Stephen Lansing said,

> Rather than postulating a totalizing cultural logic, a perfect link between symbolic systems and material practices, the task becomes a search for relationships, which can only be discovered by tracing the logic of particular symbols and practices.[31]

Logics or structures of meaning are made present through behaviours, but very importantly, they are not the behaviours. Geertz's wink was not the eyelid contraction: it was the meaning attached to it. Definitions of meaning are generated by participants as they engage with each other – they emerge from the social action. As Lansing pointed out, symbols and practices are invested with these meanings – and then they, themselves, become guides or models for action. Geertz described structures of meaning as both 'models of' and 'models for' action. They provide representations or conceptual models of action to us, and then we take action guided by those representations.

> Unlike genes, and other nonsymbolic information sources, which are only models for, not models of, culture patterns have an intrinsic double aspect. They give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves.[32]

So how do we get at this meaning? And how can we use an understanding of these patterns to help achieve our objectives?

First, it is important to recognize that this is not an easy endeavour. Communities have not organized themselves for our convenience. It takes time to figure out these local logics, to understand the local structures. And things we take for granted as important may not be true or valued elsewhere. It is important to emphasize that cross-cultural awareness or competence does not necessarily mean that one must adopt local values, to 'go native.' It is not necessary to like or endorse local behaviour to understand and work with it. As we become aware of alternative structures, we can make personal and professional decisions as to the extent that we will adopt those newly learned perspectives as our own. And finally, and perhaps most importantly and often forgotten, the better we understand ourselves and the image we project, the better we will be able to understand others.

Defining the competency

Cross-cultural engagements do come easier to some than to others. Some individuals do have personality traits that appear to make it easier for them. However, there are other, equally important dimensions of cross-cultural competence that are learned.

There has been a great deal of research on cross-cultural competence. Although most of it has been conducted for non-military communities such as healthcare or business, it has relevance in a

military environment. Abbe, Gulick and Herman[33] produced an excellent summary of that research for the U.S. Army. Deardoff's[34] textbook on intercultural competence includes a summary of the theoretical research, and some very useful chapters on cross-cultural competence written from a non-Western point of view. Leung, Ang and Tan's[35] recently published review article on intercultural competence focuses heavily on a concept called 'cultural intelligence' or CQ, but covers other approaches as well. Spencer's[36] book also focuses on cultural intelligence. Selmeski's[37] monograph on cross-cultural competence contains some specific references to Canadian defence forces. As the themes, theories and topics in these overviews are all remarkably similar, rather than recreate the work, we will draw heavily on these sources unless otherwise noted.

All the reviews point out the diversity in the field at the detailed level (for example, Spitzberg and Changnon[38] provide a list of over 300 "Concept and Factor Labels Associated With Interpersonal, Communicative, and Intercultural Competence"). However, all conclude by identifying fairly similar areas of importance. Spitzberg and Chagnon[39] describe several conceptual models of cross-cultural competence but they note that "The theories and models display…considerable similarity in their broad brushstrokes (e.g., motivation, knowledge, skills, context, outcomes)…"[40] Leung, Ang and Tan provide an overview of the literature, a brief overview of five recognized measurement instruments which address these areas, including the Global Competence Inventory and the Cultural Intelligence Scale, and then divide intercultural competence (their label for cross-cultural competence) into intercultural traits, intercultural attitudes and world views, and intercultural capabilities.[41] Abbe, Gulick and Herman[42] identify what they call three 'components' of cross-cultural competence: knowledge and cognition, affect and motivation, and skills.

So although there appears to be great diversity of specifics, and little agreement on how to measure cross-cultural competence, there is agreement on three general areas or dimensions that support the demonstration of the competency. There is a personality dimension, which includes motivation; a dimension that involves deep knowledge and the development of certain types of cognitive frameworks; and the ability to demonstrate certain behaviours or skills.

Can anyone be cross-culturally competent?

Militaries, businesses, and other organizations that operate internationally have a vested interest in understanding if cross-cultural competency is innate or if it can be learned. If it is innate, organizations such as special operations components or businesses will need to understand how to assess it and establish effective screening procedures. If it is learned, the same organizations will need to institute education or training programs to instill the competency in those of their members who require it. Research shows that cross-cultural competence is some combination of innate capabilities and ways of thinking and behaving that must be learned.

Personality/Antecedent variables

Personality traits or characteristics are innate; they generally cannot be learned by the time an individual reaches adulthood. If they are critical for cross-cultural competence, and if organizations find that cross-cultural competence is critical to mission success, screening and testing for these traits should be a part of selection and assessment.

There is much research focusing on psychological factors as antecedents to effective cross-cultural performance. Abbe, Gulick and Herman's review included a look at the personality traits known

as the 'Big Five,' which include openness/intellect, conscientious-ness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability.[43] They concluded that "inconsistent findings across studies, as well as the relatively small effect sizes"[44] should push us to look beyond the Big Five for dispositional traits that support cross-cultural competency. Leung, Ang and Tan's review identified traits such as open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive complex-ity and flexibility, inquisitiveness, patience, and emotional resil-ience as important but again not determinative of cross-cultural competence. The authors' examined areas such as tolerance for ambiguity, and constructs related to self-identity such as belief in self-efficacy, and the strength of identification of self with an ethnic/cultural group and concluded that while there have been relationships identified between these types of traits and inter-cultural effectiveness, the relationships "have tended to be small and sometimes inconsistent."[45] In short, while testing or pre-screening for personality traits may be useful, it is not sufficient.

Personality factors possibly relevant to cross-cultural competence can be assessed through a variety of instruments and through *in situ* activities such as role playing. There is much on-going re-search to develop reliable tests or precursor experiences for these types of traits. Earlier research by the author with American SOF components found that, in some cases, observations of behaviour are believed to be the most reliable tests for intercultural traits in the special operations environment.[46]

That said, there are some personality-based dimensions that are important. Motivation appears as an important dimension or component of cross-cultural competence in all the summary typologies. Those who practice the competency well see value in understanding alternative logics. As Leung, Ang and Tan put it, "Individuals who are highly culturally competent have positive attitudes toward intercultural contact."[47] It is important that

operators, as well as planners and strategists, recognize and understand the important role of cross-cultural competence in an irregular warfare toolkit and be positively motivated to engage effectively.

In many of the engagements for which special operators are needed, it will be the operator, not the 'other,' who will need to make the greater effort at creating common ground. Spitzberg and Chagnon point out that "the more dependent, nondominant interactant is likely to engage at greater effort at adaptation than the member of the more independent and dominant culture."[48] A large male, dressed in Western military gear, will present as dominant in many interactions with indigenous populations. As an acknowledgement of this dominance, those he encounters will endeavor to speak his language, to engage on his terms, to appear to be supporting the Western military agenda. However, it is likely that the engagement will be a surface engagement only. Kilcullen's exposition of the 'accidental guerrilla' was (in part) an effort to understand what turned many Americans thought were supporters into adversaries.[49] Patriotism, loyalty to a cause, or investment in an institution like the military, which were paradigms motivating many Western forces and assumed to be the reasons locals would join indigenous militaries and local police forces, appeared to be absent from the world view of many of the locals. Money, opportunism, fear, kinship, and a host of other motivators caused them to engage with the forces of the international coalition, and also turned them from 'good guys' by day to 'bad guys' by night. U.S. Marines who served in Iraq in 2009 training Iraqi police directly experienced this phenomenon.[50] They knew that some of the men with whom they shared barracks during the day, were 'bad guys' at night. Those Marines who were successful at mitigating this problem said that they spent a lot of time 'hanging out' with the Iraqis, telling stories, creating a sense of commonality, and gaining their trust. They believed that the Iraqis stopped

shooting at them at night not because of conversion to a cause represented by the uniforms the Iraqis were wearing, but because of the bond with individual Marines.

Ensuring that operators are motivated to become cross-culturally competent can only happen if they understand the value of learning the perspectives of others. Some of the motivation can come from an understanding of the importance of cross-cultural competence in an IW toolkit. Other aspects of motivation are individuated. They include personality factors such as an openness to new experiences, and extraversion. Motivation also can stem from a personal history of positive experience with cross-cultural encounters. Individuals who successfully navigated dual communities during childhood and adolescence tend to exhibit greater cross-cultural competence as an adult. Someone who successfully navigated high school as a member of a minority population, for example, might be better experienced than the captain of sports team who operated from a position of dominance and expected others to conform to him.

Learning to think differently

Personality traits are innate. The other two aspects of cross-cultural competence – learning to think differently and to behave differently – can be learned. These learned dimensions focus on an individual's ability to adopt a critical perspective on his social environment, i.e. to think critically. As Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman said, "as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases."[51]

Learning to think differently, or how to exercise a cross-cultural perspective, is the most difficult aspect of cross-cultural competence to teach and assess. This is the dimension encompassed by Leung, Ang and Tan's second category, intercultural attitudes and world

views, Spitzberg and Chagnon's 'knowledge' category, and Abbe, Gulick and Herman's 'knowledge and cognition' component. In all cases, those who are cross-culturally competent have a cognitive recognition of the complexity, depth and motivational power of alternative perspectives. As Leung, Ang and Tan put it, "Individuals who are highly interculturally competent have sophisticated, rather than ethnocentric or simplistic, constructs of cultural differences and similarities."[52] They recognize that there may be a difference of fundamental assumptions between oneself and an other, and are motivated enough to learn about those assumptions and to develop the ability to constructively use that knowledge to achieve a goal. It is with this knowledge that the observer knows that he must distinguish between a twitch, a wink, and a parody of a twitch, and understands the signals that allow him to do so. Note that this dimension of cross-cultural competency does not require learning facts about a particular community or behaviours practiced there, but does require learning how to think differently.

Almost counterintuitively, development of appreciation of an 'other' is founded on a heightened sense of self-awareness, and appreciation of how one's self appears to the other. This appreciation of self and other can be taught through classroom work exposing individuals to the possibilities and importance of understanding alternative structures of meaning, as well as through immersion experiences or role playing where students are forced to constructively engage with an 'other.'

Behaving differently

This dimension of cross-cultural competence does involve facts and behaviours. It is learning the list of do's and don'ts, and then being able to produce those behaviours. It is learning that it is important not to look someone directly in the eyes in some parts of the world unless you wish to show disrespect, and then being able to

be appropriately indirect. It is recognizing that many non-military agencies do not value punctuality in the same way the military does – and then choosing to avoid penalizing inter-agency partners who are 'late' to a meeting by not starting precisely on time.

The importance of context

Finally, context or environment comes into play as cross-cultural competence is not the only factor influencing behaviour in a given situation. The behaviours and capabilities of other players, situational and organizational factors such as resource availability, available time and probably above all, mission requirements or purpose will all influence behaviour. No one cares about cross-cultural competency for its own sake. We care about intercultural or cross-cultural effectiveness, about the ability to use the competency to achieve other ends. We want to be able to discern the difference between a twitch and a wink in order to accomplish some goal. Cross-cultural competence can often allow participants to devise solutions to problems that otherwise might seem intractable, a demonstration of cross-cultural effectiveness. For example, a group of Marines setting up a checkpoint in Iraq were told by local power figures that searching females passing through would incite violence. Unwilling to take the risk, the Marines set up a small booth for privacy at the checkpoint, and recruited and trained local females for help with the searches.[53] The Marines recognized that there was a problem searching females, understood why there was a problem, and devised a solution that accommodated the values of the local community.

Regional knowledge and culture-general perspectives

Another recurring theme in discussions of cross-cultural competency is the difference between what Selmeski[54] calls 'culture-specific' and 'culture general' knowledge.

Culture-specific, or regional knowledge, is declarative and procedural knowledge, usually focused around a specific geographic area, ethnic group, or other community. Procedural knowledge is knowledge of how to do things – how to wear a sari, for example, or how to wind a turban. Declarative knowledge is knowledge about facts (if I wear a certain type of hat, then it means I have made the *hajj*). 'Pashtuns are members of a tribe who live on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border' is declarative knowledge, as is 'Islam is divided into two major sects or groups: Sunni and Shi'ite.' 'Don't ask an Afghan man direct questions about his female relatives' is procedural knowledge. This is the behavioural dimension of cross-cultural competency discussed earlier. The student must identify the appropriate behaviours, and then be able to re-produce them.

Regional experts and some expatriates or emigrants are good sources of culture-specific knowledge. Good observation skills also are important, although the student must know what is worth observing and what is not.

Obviously, culture-specific knowledge can provide the groundwork for appropriate behaviour in specific parts of the world or with specific groups. T.E. Lawrence, *aka* Lawrence of Arabia, was famously well-versed in Arab culture and used that to his advantage in his campaigns on behalf of the British on the Arabian Peninsula. However, he failed miserably to be effective when later posted to India's Northwest Frontier in what is now Pakistan.[55] His regional knowledge was not transferrable.

There are some important caveats to culture- or region-specific knowledge. First is its currency. This type of knowledge changes with time. Some parts of it, like information on political alliances, will change faster than other parts (descriptions of politeness behaviours, for example). Individuals living in immigrant or expatriate communities who come from a region of interest may

be useful sources for certain types of knowledge, but some of their knowledge may be outdated. Regional experts also must keep current. The second caveat is the locality or specificity of the knowledge. If the operator is heading for a Hazara-controlled area of Afghanistan, an 'Afghanistan expert' with deep knowledge of Pashtun regions may not be useful. American troops in Afghanistan found that certain important cultural dimensions varied from valley to valley – although general knowledge of the ethnic group was useful, the operators needed to be highly aware of valley-specific variations. Understanding how to appropriately define 'region' can be critical to the usefulness of this type of information.

Cultural-general knowledge, as Selmeski defines it, is a broader understanding of the possibility of paradigmatic or world view differences, and a willingness to acknowledge and work with those differences, no matter where or how they manifest. This is the cognitive component of cross-cultural competency discussed earlier. It not an accumulation of facts but rather is a way of thinking, a perspective on the behaviour of others. It is not region-specific: as an underlying understanding of what 'culture' is and means, it is useful worldwide. Where this term appears in this discussion, we will refer to it as 'culture-general perspective' rather than culture-general knowledge.

Students of cross-cultural competence often ask which is most valuable: regional knowledge; a culture-general perspective, i.e. an understanding of how to find, work with and perhaps and self-reproduce local structures of meaning; or knowledge of language. Military approaches to cross-cultural competence often focus on language or regional studies, and neglect or lightly treat the development of a culture-general perspective.

Regional studies, and language training at the introductory and early intermediate levels (which is all most military personnel

receive) do provide the operator with procedural and declarative knowledge. Full fluency, which requires language training at an advanced level, is not possible without a deeper and more subtle understanding of some culture-general constructs. The American Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions, used to establish skill levels for compensation and assignment purposes for the U.S. military, points out that "communicative effectiveness entails more than language,…[so] these Descriptions of Competence in Intercultural Communication incorporate both linguistic and extralinguistic elements." For example, learning to use honorifics, or terms of respect, when speaking to someone older than you or more senior in rank is not becoming 'cross-culturally competent.' Learning to use those honorifics in ways which appropriately express and manipulate relationships is. As an example, note that General de la Billière, Director of the British Strategic Air Service (SAS) from 1989-1993, recalled that as a junior officer in the SAS, "The men, for their part, never called me 'Sir' unless they wanted to be rude."[56] The 'regional' knowledge would be that officers are called 'sir' by enlisted personnel as a mark of respect. The more complex deconstruction would recognize that, in this case, enlisted personnel meant something entirely different. This is a version of the Geertz's twitch and wink. The behaviour is the same in both instances; the meaning, the thick description, is entirely different. As a second example, a friend of the author's was denied access to a region of Indonesia because, in correspondence to an Indonesian official who was also a good friend of his, he used the familiar form of the Indonesian second person pronoun while in an official setting. Understanding what respect means, how it is expressed, and how its expression shapes power relationships no matter where or how it is demonstrated is an exercise in cross-cultural competence. It recognizes the deep logics underneath the surface behaviour. Using that knowledge to accomplish a goal is being cross-culturally effective. To get inside 'their' decision loops, you must understand what is salient for 'them.'

Obviously, the most effective operator would be one operating at the intersection of regional knowledge, a culture-general perspective, and linguistic proficiency. (See Figure 2.)
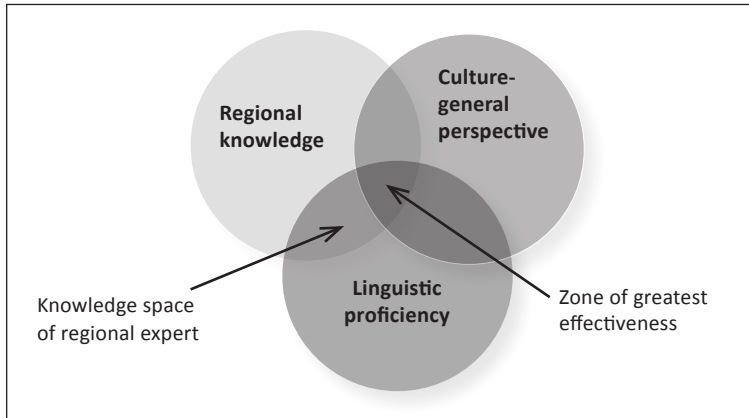

FIGURE 2: The intersection of regional, general and linguistic competence

However, should such multi-dimensional training not be available, the most effective place to start is with the development of a culture-general perspective. Such a perspective is applicable no matter where the individual is operating – the hills of Afghanistan, or the meeting rooms of Ottawa or Washington. It also provides the operator or analyst a critical framework within which to understand and engage with locally defined behaviours. Supplementing a strong culture-general perspective with some regional knowledge and linguistic proficiency will develop an effective competency base.

The Importance of Motivation

The importance of motivation in the development of cross-cultural competency should not be underestimated. It is particularly difficult in an environment (the military) that historically has been defined by proficiency in kinetic activity. Non-kinetic engagement

with others is not an iconic – or valued – military activity.   It also puts the student at some personal risk, for it raises the possibility of challenge to some fundamental and deeply held beliefs. It thus becomes extremely important for SOF to have an understanding of the relative importance of cross-cultural competence in the particular task environments in which they will be working. Becoming cross-culturally competent – developing the culture-general framework that allows us to understand other logics – is hard and takes time. Motivation to begin and stay the course is key.

The brief history of American IW and, more specifically, COIN doctrine given earlier was intended to underscore the importance of cross-cultural competence in today's military environment, and particularly for SOF. It showed that IW is not new to military planners. However, what is new is IW's position relative to traditional, Clausewitzian force-on-force encounters, and the accompanying shift in the role and importance of SOF. If irregular warfare has, indeed, become 'regular,' SOF will be front and centre (or, at the very least, heavily engaged) in most military encounters of the upcoming decades. As presented earlier, historical and current IW doctrine and approaches heavily emphasize "intimate contact with populations."[57] Any reading of IW history and doctrine show that this 'intimate contact' is of a particular kind, going far beyond kinetic engagement. As Thomas Rid put it in his description of French military activities in Africa in the mid-1800s,

> Ethnological inquiries had to be undertaken, a society's traditions and its values had to be respected, rivalries and animosities between local groups should be studied and exploited, the trust of the local population should be gained by demonstrating to them the benefits of cooperation with the French.[58]

Galliéni argued that in order to be effective, his military must execute a "combination of political action with military action"

and "enter into intimate contact with the populations, exploring their tendencies, their mentality, and striving to satisfy their needs in order to attach them through persuasion to the new institutions."[59] The first published version of FM3-24, the American COIN manual heavily based on Galula's interpretation of the French African experience, stated that "Commanders and planners require insight into cultures, perceptions, values, beliefs, interests and decision-making processes of individuals and groups."[60] This is contact of the kind that requires knowledge of how to use the values, attitudes and world views of others often for conflict prevention or mitigation, as well as to leverage other more traditional military approaches. Developing this type of intimacy requires cross-cultural competence.

> *The value of adaptive special operations forces*
> *is at least as much in their mindset as in their skill set.*
>
> *ADM Eric Olson (ret),*
> *Former Commander of USSOCOM*[61]

Understanding 'Understanding the Population'

Cross-cultural competence is best exercised by those with certain personality traits such as openness, tolerance of ambiguity, and inquisitiveness. Although individuals without these traits can develop the competence, it is likely they will not be as skilled in exercising it. However, although personality constructs are important, they are not sufficient and it is unclear how big an influence they do have on the exercise of the competence. Cross-cultural competence also requires the ability to learn certain behaviours and when to use them. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, cross-cultural competence also requires the ability to 'think differently,' to have a positive and critical appreciation of the power of local logics, the adoption of a culture-general perspective.

This section will introduce some general dimensions and strategies of a cultural perspective. It will begin with a discussion of the construct of the other that often forms the basis of an initial engagement. This construct is one which sees the other as a representative of a group that has some conceptual and internal integrity. We can talk of Afghans and distinguish them from Filipinos, of Americans and think of them separately from Canadians, of the military and tell them apart from the diplomatic corps. This conceptualization causes us to distance or remove ourselves from the object of study, to see it as a thing in the world. It creates a construct that allows us to work with generalities like 'Americans' or 'the military,' preparing us in some important ways for contact with people who move through the world in ways that are substantially different from ours. In this formulation, 'culture' is an important part of what makes a Somali a Somali or a diplomat a diplomat.

As we get closer to actual engagements, we find that the neatly delineated groups dissolve and we become tangled in networks of relationships. We make sense of those networks by drawing back a bit and seeing patterns and structure emerge from the fluidity of daily contact. However, those patterns are highly dynamic, changing with the ebb and flow of relationships. 'Culture' here is neither the relationships nor the patterns, although it emerges from and simultaneously drives both. Just as Geertz pointed out that, while the wink required the contraction of the eyelid, it was not the contraction but the meaning attached to it that was important, so it is with relationships. It is not the connection itself but the meaning that is attached to the connections and the patterns they make, and the associated motivations that drive people to make those connections that are of interest. The focus of this discussion will be on the development of a critical perspective that allows SOF to better understand the impact of their own behaviour, and better leverage the behaviour of others.

Developing a cross-cultural perspective

The concept of culture and how we should think about it has been debated for centuries. European humanists of the 19th century believed that to be 'cultured' was to exhibit a high level of sophistication, to be refined in thought and behaviour. Culture was often contrasted with a state of nature, or of anarchy. This school of thought, embedded in the intellectual climate that also stimulated Charles Darwin, led to the emergence of a theory of Social Darwinism, of the proposition that culture evolved from that found in very 'simple' groups to its complex culmination in the refined behaviour of the elites of Western European civilization.[62]

Today's consideration of the concept looks rather different. The term is more inclusive and rather more democratic. There is an acceptance that all groups exhibit characteristics of culture, and that all cultural constructs exhibit complexity, albeit in different ways.

This discussion will stay away from the 'what is culture' argument, and focus on the active engagement with others and how that can be made more efficacious through the development of cross-cultural competency. We have shown that warfare, as it currently practiced and anticipated to be practiced for the foreseeable future, puts a heavy premium on the ability to engage effectively with local populations. Through the 'whole of government' approach to IW, it also requires that military personnel be proficient in engagement with colleagues without military backgrounds and who see the prosecution of armed conflict in very different terms than does the military. As SOF play a prominent role in IW, the ability to cross-culturally engage is a very important part of their toolset.

First encounters

Encounters with others often begin with a label: Somalis; an NGO; Afghans; the diplomatic corps. These labels create perceptions

of groups that have fairly clear boundaries and imply an internal integrity. This conceptualization allows us to distance or remove ourselves from the object of study, to see it as a thing in the world. The idea of a 'culture' as a thing separate from the people who practice it, as a thing that exists in the world like a tree or a rock or as a process in which we can choose to engage (or not), arose from an intellectual tradition that likened social entities to biological entities. This analogy posits the same kinds of structural and functional integration and harmony in society as was assumed to be present in nature. Radcliffe-Brown, an early British anthropologist working in Africa, described this perspective as follows:

> Such a view implies that a social system…has a certain kind of unity, which we may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e. without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated.[63]

This perspective thus presents a vision of independent, social entities whose constituent parts work together to promote stability and the functioning of the whole over time. The observer is separate from the society he is observing. The target society is decomposed into its different parts: political systems, economic systems, religious systems, and the like. The parts, or functions, are abstractions developed from aggregate observations of behaviour. As Émile Durkheim said in his study of suicide, for example, "The individuals making up a society change from year to year, yet the number of suicides is the same so long as the society itself does not change."[64]

This is a reductionist approach which assumes that we can understand the political system as a system or structure separate from,

for example, the economic system. Each of the parts of a society can be examined independently to better understand how it contributes to the functioning of the whole. Once we have understood the component parts, we can reconstruct the whole from them. This promotes a world view such as that illustrated in Figure 3.
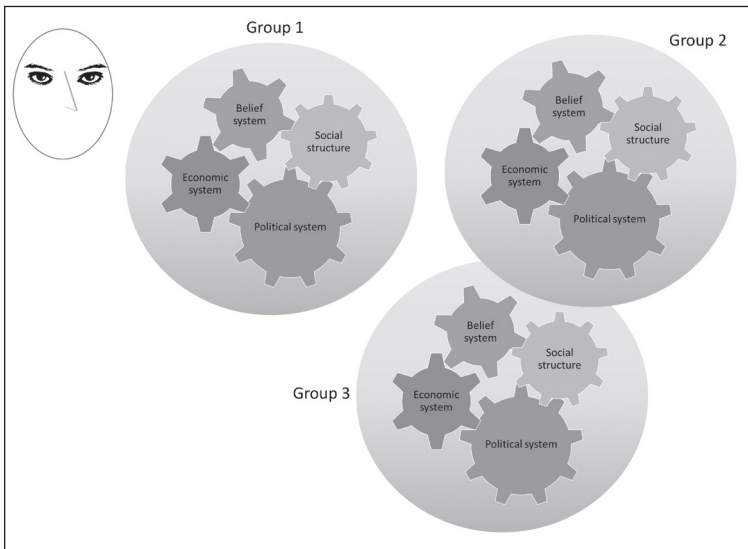

FIGURE 3: A group-based perspective

There are several important points to note from this illustration. The observer, in the upper left, is separate from the observed. There is no engagement or entanglement, so the observed groups function after contact just as they did before. Engagement is transitory. The observer also is different from the observed, as he does not appear to be subject to the same group dynamics as are they. There is no self-awareness in this cartoon. And note that although the group boundaries may overlap, each group retains its structural and organizational integrity with a separate and distinct edge, clearly demarcating where the group starts and ends. Finally, note that each group is composed of the same functions, although they may manifest through different behaviours.

This type of an approach provides a convenient point of entry into parts of the world that may otherwise be difficult for us to categorize or discuss. It yields descriptions of whole groups that can give a place to start an engagement (i.e. 'this is what makes Americans different from Canadians'). Formalized into Culture and Personality typologies such as those promoted by Geert Hofstede,[65] these approaches establish descriptive factors along which the behavioural predilections of members of a group can be described, again pointing out the differences between groups. For example, Richard Nisbett and Takahiko Masuda show that:

> Westerners are inclined to attend to some focal object, analyzing its attributes and categorizing it in an effort to find out what rules govern its behavior. Rules used include formal logic. Causal attributions tend to focus exclusively on the object and are therefore often mistaken. East Asians are more likely to attend to a broad perceptual and conceptual field, noticing relationships and changes and grouping objects based on family resemblance rather than category membership. Causal attributions emphasize the context. Social factors are likely to be important in directing attention.[66]

This approach also provides the conceptual basis for global geocultural arguments such as Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' which speaks of fault lines between large, internally coherent groups.[67]

This externalizing perspective provide us with formalisms which we can use no matter where we are in the world. We can look for political systems in Mali or Madagascar, or try to understand the economic system in Peru or Pakistan. Salmoni and Holmes-Eber, for example, identify five abstracted dimensions of operational culture in their work directed towards the U.S. Marines – the physical environment, the economy, social structure, the political

structure, and beliefs and symbols.[68] (These would be the cogs in the cartoon in Figure 3.) Salmoni and Holmes-Eber charge the Marines (and others) to apply these dimensions as universal explanatory concepts, with some useful results.[69] And, finally, Western governments are constructed along lines that are drawn along similar abstracted functions, so it is a formalism with which we are comfortable. Diplomatic issues are the concern of the State Department or a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. State-sanctioned use of force belongs to the military. The government then lies at the intersection of all the functions: it is the system reconstructed from its parts.

While an approach based on these types of ideas can be useful as an entry point or a beginning, as relationships become more entangled, its usefulness declines. This approach incorporates no dynamics and there are no mechanisms for change. The inherent bias towards stability leads to descriptions of institutions and social functions as they support the *status quo*. Rebellions, insurgencies, protests, and similar actions are difficult to understand in terms other than as social dysfunctionalities. A changing threat environment also can challenge the *status quo*. For example, the American separation of the world into 'us' and the 'other' was reflected in the Cold War era separation of federal jurisdiction between the intelligence function (which could surveil foreigners but not American citizens) and the law enforcement function (which applied only to citizens). This separation is problematized in the 21st century by the notion of 'home-grown' or citizen-terrorists. The American courts, law enforcement and intelligence institutions are still struggling with adjustments to this new world, adjustments which often come in fits and starts as they are forced changes to formal groups where boundaries must be redrawn.

Equally importantly, this distancing, group-based approach does not fully incorporate the vagaries of individual actions. All

individuals in a demarcated group are assumed to be more or less the same, although recent research is become more nuanced in its expression, (see language in the quote from Nisbett and Masuda earlier, which said, for example, that "Westerners were inclined…" and "East Asians are more likely…"). However, these typologies, despite their careful presentations, push us towards relatively homogenous characterizations of groups. American troops discovered the danger of this approach in Afghanistan. Structures of meaning and systems of importance often varied from one valley to the next, never mind the differences that appeared when one moved from rural areas to urban, or from an area controlled by one ethnic group to an area controlled by another. And even if a group can be fairly tightly defined (such as the 'military,' clearly marked by dress and behaviour codes, specialized languages, and the like), the behaviour of individuals within the group will vary, sometimes significantly. The concept of 'group' (which we will discuss in greater detail later) often must be problematized in ways this perspective does not recognize.

Creating webs of interaction

The second cultural perspective described here begins with the individual behaviours that the focus on groups abstracts away. The individual-based perspective addresses the ways in which the connections or relationships individuals form yield patterns. These patterns, over time, become formalized into social structures like institutions and structures of meaning such as the importance of the family or the meaning of respect. This way of thinking about culture, with its initial focus on behaviour and ultimate focus on meaning, underpins discussions such as David Kilcullen's exploration of the 'accidental guerrilla' and the strategic failure of traditional counterterrorism and counterinsurgency campaigns,[70] and assertions by John Arquilla[71] and others about the prevalence and importance of social networks that radically changed intelligence

analyses of social interaction. A recognition of the role that exhibitions of similarity plays in forming the connections that construct networks underscores a very important point in operationalizing cross-cultural competence. A search for and emphasis on similarities can be a very effective means to become entangled.

Individuals generally connect because they have recognized another individual who is 'like' them in some way – a tendency described as homophily.[72] Like connects with like to create webs of relationships that become formalized into institutions and groups. However, what 'like' means, how it is defined, is local: it requires the exercise of a cross-cultural perspective to identify the attributes of importance in establishing connections in a particular place, and the relative salience of those attributes. When two people meet in Albuquerque, New Mexico – how salient is skin color? nationality? ethnicity? religion? whether or not they smoke? or live in a particular neighborhood? Do these same attributes hold, and have the same relative importance in Vancouver, British Columbia? Or Beijing? Clearly, the importance and relative salience of each attribute is determined by context. Kinship is very important in most of the world – but not so important in North America. Understanding the dynamics of clan membership is critical in navigating the Middle East and Africa – but would probably not help too much in Vancouver or New York City.

In general, people connect based on similarities around behavioural clusters called social roles, or because they hold similar values. Individuals create multiple, simultaneously active webs of connectivity based on these different dimensions of homophily, leading to multiple self-definitions. One can simultaneously be a soldier and a father and a Catholic, or a soldier and a mechanic and Muslim. Major-General Michael Rouleau, Commander of CANSOFCOM, points out that SOF:

> … are constantly forced to contend with a duality of military relationships: one as a SOF member in the military and the other as a military member who also does the "SOF thing" from time to time. SOF officers and senior enlisted leaders must be like chimeras with one strand of their DNA rooted in conventional military affairs and the other as a SOF operator.[73]

Although Rouleau claims that this "duality of military relationships" lends individual SOF members "an element of internal insecurity,"[74] it is important to recognize that every one of us constantly chooses to emphasize one of the many webs of connections in which we are engaged, and the identities we develop from them. Confronted with a military mission requiring certain specialized capabilities, a member of the force may privilege (put front and centre) his role as a special operator and a member of a SOF community. A conversation about the allocation of Canadian resources to national defence may cause the same individual to speak as a military man, to speak with the same voice as those in the Canadian Armed Forces. By the same token, failing to recognize which role or identity is privileged by those with whom we are in contact can have consequences. Recognizing that the Pashtuns privilege an ethnic identity that crosses national boundaries over a national identity was an important step forward in the coalition understanding of military activity in that area. The complex of activity needed to understand the adversary did not stop at the Durand Line, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Conflicts between those who self-identify and connect in terms of behaviourally-based social roles usually stem from disagreements around expectations of those behaviours. Iraqi military recruits did not exhibit the behaviour coalition forces expected from soldiers, for example. They were perceived to be slovenly in dress, undisciplined, and uncommitted to soldiering. This led to frustration

on the part of coalition forces, and difficulty in executing effective training regimes. It is important to note that the Iraqi recruits may well have been exhibiting what they themselves saw as appropriate behaviour for fighters (which is not the same as military recruits). How well we believe we are meeting the behaviour expectations of roles we choose to use as primary self-identifiers is an important component of self-esteem.[75] In this case, each group – the coalition advisors and trainers, and the Iraqi recruits – may have used the same label for different sets of behaviours with uncomfortable results for all. The label similarity (we are all military men) set up false expectations of behavioural similarity.

Conflicts between individuals who try (and fail) to connect in terms of values rather than behaviour are usually more violent than the role- or behaviour-based conflicts. When connections are made in terms of values, rather than thinking of ourselves as 'doing' the same thing as others, we think of ourselves as believing in or valuing the same things. When we think of and engage with others because of these value-based connections, we often engage with them as representatives of that group, rather than as unique selves.[76] This process is how we form stereotypes, and express positive valuation of our own group's behaviour and negatively describe the behaviour of other groups. And just as these disconnects can be more violent than the behaviour-based disconnects, so can the connections be stronger and longer-lasting. If we are both medics, we may recognize each other through behaviours or various tools of the trade we are carrying and easily begin talking. We are more likely to engage in conflict if I identify myself as a Jew (or you discover it) and you are a Muslim, even though we may both be medics. However, if we can find a connection based on similar values, that will be stronger than a connection we make based on our profession. American military personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan made important connections with local fighters as both men, American and Iraqi or Afghan, came together

over stories of their fathers' and their fathers' fathers' military service.[77] Their connection was their membership in a multi-generational fighting brotherhood. Rudyard Kipling celebrated a similar connection in the third and fourth lines of his poem, *The Ballad of East and West*[78]*:*

> But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
> When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

Identification as a member of a group based on common values prototypes, stereotypes and values in-group and out-group behaviours.[79]

The implications for cross-cultural engagement are clear. Identification of points of similarity through behaviour-based experiences based on social roles can often be an entré, a useful point of connection. Attempts to bridge differences stemming from differences in values can be very difficult, and quickly lead to conflict, although if connections can be made on a value basis, they have the potential to be strong and enduring. While military personnel acting in a professional capacity put national identity ahead of religious or ethnic or other identities in encounters with indigenous personnel, they may be doing themselves a disservice at times. They also are fathers or mothers, hunters, farmers, or soccer players – identities which may form much easier points of connection with those they hope to understand and/or positively engage. Recognizing that it might be hard for all parties (including the Americans) to see past the identity conferred by military uniforms and gear, the American Special Forces, for example, have famously relaxed uniform standards for units in certain types of circumstances.

Transcending military identities in interagency work can also be difficult. Consider a meeting on a joint project between the U.S. Department of Defense, staffed by two U.S. Marines, and the quasi-independent Department of State agency, USAID. The Marines arrive five minutes before the meeting begins and are seated, ready to begin at start time; USAID personnel continue to trickle in about 20 minutes past the official meeting start time and stand around talking. At some point, the USAID meeting chair begins the meeting, but immediately changes the agenda with the addition of a talk by an individual who just returned from a field project. The Marines were looking for decisions to be made on certain agenda items for which they were responsible which appeared about two-thirds of the way down the agenda, and for movement forward on the project. They soon asked for attention to the stated agenda items, a request that was politely acknowledged and then ignored. After the talk, there was general discussion around the first few items on the agenda in no particular order, and the meeting was adjourned. Overheard hallway conversations between USAID members indicated satisfaction with the meeting, recognition of assignments made, and a general feeling of progress. The Marines were very unhappy, having seen no formal assignment of responsibility or decision-making on any of the project's agenda items, and certainly no decisions on theirs. They also did not see the path forward that was being discussed by the USAID personnel.[80] Clearly, there were missed opportunities on both sides for communication and associated joint work. Just as clearly, neither group realized the opportunity or took advantage of it.

It's a matter of belonging

People create connections based on homophily, or the recognition of same-ness. Over time, those connections become regularized to some degree, and are described as groups or organizations or institutions although their boundaries may not be as clear

or as stable as those envisioned by a group approach as described earlier.

Collections of enduring connections acquire labels from participants (e.g. Canada; the military; my family). These labels illustrate how participants break up the world, and give people a common vocabulary and common ground. Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist whom many also call the 'father of cybernetics,' said that "What we mean by information…is a difference which makes a difference."[81] The Sunni-Shi'ite divide in Middle Eastern Islam, for example, was a difference that was opaque to many American policymakers in the early years of the current conflict there. It was not a 'difference that made a difference' in America – yet it was one over which people, including Americans, would lose their lives in Iraq and elsewhere. The divide quickly did become a difference that mattered in America. Listening for differences that matter to others but not to you – or vice versa – is an important way to find a window into other systems of meaning.

Despite their labels and the appearance of permanence, group boundaries can be very problematic under this approach. They may be porous, as the United States has long known, evidenced by its history dealing with illegal immigrants from Mexico, or as Afghanistan and Pakistan have found along what is known as the Northwest Frontier. Borders or group boundaries also may not define an 'us' and a 'them' as clearly as we would like. Are the illegal Mexican immigrants in the U.S., many of whom have lived in the U.S. for decades and raised families there, members of American communities or Mexican communities? How about the itinerant farm labour, (mostly) men who come across the border to pick harvests, send money home to families in Mexico, while simultaneously starting new families in California or New Mexico? To which community do they belong?

Groups also can be situationally defined. We speak of the Middle East region, for example. Does that include Pakistan, which certainly influences activities in the area? It may, in some contexts. In others, it may exclude Pakistan but include Morocco with its Arab population. As another example, consider the case given earlier of the 'dual' identities of SOF as members of a special operations group and of the regular force, and the selection between those identities as the situation demanded.

This individual-based perspective sees these labeled collections of connections, such as 'the military' or 'the Darod clan' in Somalia, both emerging from interaction and directing interaction. For example, a group of individuals from different agencies may meet to discuss a project. This is a formal interaction, with individuals representing their agencies. Casual conversations during breaks and after the meeting create friendships among a subset of participants. They begin meeting informally for coffee, and their friendship deepens. An issue surfaces at the agency of one of them, an issue that would benefit from cross-agency participation. He calls one of his meet-over-coffee friend who works at an agency with which collaboration would be a benefit and who is engaged with the problem there. They meet over coffee and create an interagency working group in which they, and others, will have formal membership on behalf of their respective agencies.

This focus on the individual and his interactions begins to create a different picture of groups than that we saw in Figure 3. We now see webs of interaction among clusters of individuals as shown in Figure 4, where group boundaries emerge, and can subsequently disappear, as a function of those interactions.
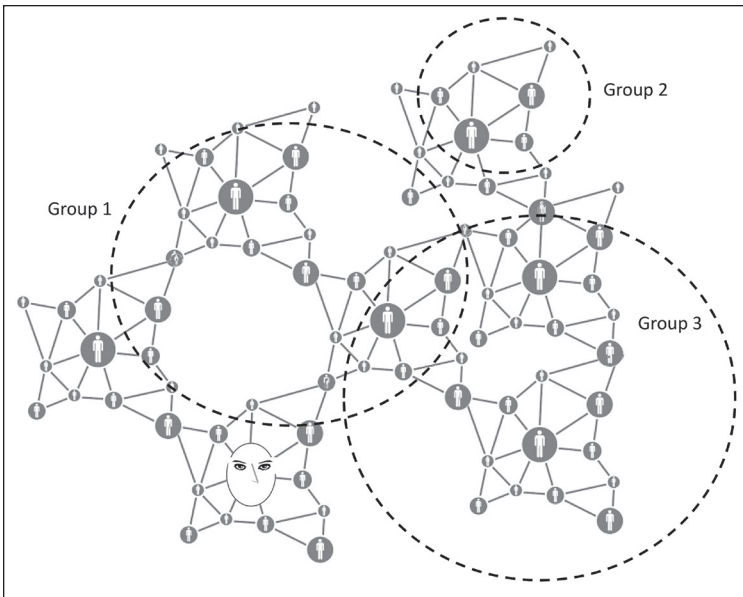
FIGURE 4: Webs of interaction

Note that observer is part of the network in this picture (bottom left). If he leaves, the configuration will change, the network will re-form. This is a very important difference from the construct in Figure 3 where the observer was external to the observed. The insertion of the observer requires, for example, that descriptions of present-day Afghanistan or Pakistan's Northwest Frontier include not only village life and kinship, clan and ethnic structures, but also the engagement with the forces of the international coalition, the residue of historic engagements with the Russians and the British, and so on.

Groups are still evident in Figure 4 – but that what is important in this diagram are not the group boundaries, but the connections between individuals. Some individuals are connected to others in different groups, some are members of two groups, and others are connected but a member of none. In the earlier example, it was

not the formal establishment of a working group that facilitated interagency engagement, but the informal connections. Group boundaries will shift, appear and disappear as relationships and the structures and patterns they form change over time.

Under this approach, organizations or institutions are a way to make sense of what otherwise would be random interactions. To force a turn away from the abstracted group that was at the centre of the earlier paradigm, Bougon, Weick and Binkhorst suggest a focus on organizing, not the organization: think of organizations as "snapshots of ongoing processes selected and controlled by consciousness and attentiveness."[82] Or as Weick put it, "Organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it toward certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules."[83]

The informal connections described in the vignette above created a working group which then defined its members as belonging to that group. Institutions thus are created by the actors as they recognize formalized interaction – and those institutions then direct and constrain subsequent action. As W. Richard Scott puts it, "actors in interaction constitute social structures, which in turn constitute actors."[84] This is Geertz's 'models of' and 'models for' perspective described earlier. A pattern abstracted from behaviour becomes a thing-in-the-world, a thing separate from the behaviour – but then turns around and directs and constrains subsequent behaviour, which then creates new patterns. It is an ongoing dance.

This is not to say that constructs like the 'operational culture dimensions' identified earlier need to be abandoned. However, under this perspective, they need to be differently utilized. Application of labels is a way to make sense of the world. Under

the group-based approach, labels usually reflect the sense the observer makes of the world. The analyst or the observer approaches a group looking for pre-defined dimensions. Under an individual-based approach, the same labels may or may not appear in a description. The analyst or observer enters the system with no expectations, but lets the observed behaviour tell him how exchange systems are constructed and how they interact with the exercise of power. The dimensions are emergent, intertwined, and ever-changing. Calling the Iraqi recruits something other than 'soldiers' might have caused the coalition forces to see them differently and develop and exercise training and deployment regimes differently.

A perspective which focuses on individuals, their behaviour and their connections provides rich, dynamic constructs of human groups. However, collecting the data to construct them is difficult and time-consuming. Much of the data collection cannot be automated, but requires human collectors. (The increasing recognition of the importance of what intelligence practitioners call human intelligence – HUMINT – comes from this requirement.) And it is not easy or quick for a collector to learn to understand relevant cues – to identify the differences that make a difference, and those that do not matter. (As Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame said, in a variation of Bateson's statement, "A difference that makes no difference is no difference."[85]) This focus on individual behaviour can cause an analyst or operator to get lost in the data and lose sight of the larger constructs needed for action.

In addition to the resource requirements for collecting the data required under this approach, there are challenges with storing the data (how do we construct a data storage structure if these institutions are not universal?). And finally, as much of the data is qualitative, there are significant challenges on the analytic side. Qualitative data is not easily or robustly subject to computational manipulation. (Current computational social models use

proxies of varying legitimacy for qualitative information.[86]) As human analysts have significant limitations in terms of bandwidth and capabilities, analytic resources are constrained.

Organizing and organizations

These descriptions of the group-based and individual-based perspectives should challenge our own thinking about ourselves and about others, which is the basis of cross-cultural competence. Each of the approaches offers perspectives that can be valuable in engagements with others, but detrimental in other ways. As with most analytic approaches, the most useful position is that in between the two extremes. The perspective which focuses on groups allows for the development of certain universal constructs, and permits us to think about groups of individuals in relatively homogeneous terms. This approach allows us to form a conception of those with whom we will engage before we engage although it somewhat blinds us to the possibility of variation within groups, and sets up a clear demarcation between 'us' and 'them.' It encourages an outward focus, a look at the 'other,' and emphasizes the differences between us and them, both counterproductive as engagements become more intimate. The second perspective elevates the importance of the individual and the relationships and connections he forms. This approach specifically describes a dynamic phenomenon and looks for connections rather than separations between 'us' and 'them.' The danger here is that we get lost in the data, in the stream of behaviour, and that the focus on organizing causes us to lose sight of the organization, the pattern that emerges.

It should be clear by this point that a cross-cultural perspective has to take into account both organizations and the social processes that create them. It must look at both organizations and organizing.

The group approach assumes an organization that is relatively finite and clearly bounded. In some cases, such as when considering engagement with another government agency or a formalized international NGO, this assumption can be useful, as certain types of organizations are formally defined. Membership in these organizations is clear, often defined by membership cards, uniforms, or contractual agreements. Members subscribe to a set of rules which define offices or positions that can be occupied by any individual who meets the criteria for that position. The rules also define the tasks or behaviour required from the individuals who occupy those positions. Since these rules exist over time, they ensure that the behaviour of each person in the office will be the same (within certain boundaries) as the person before him. Rules also exist for transition from one office holder to the next, ensuring (again, in theory) a conflict-free transition. Finally, the rules establish a mechanism for dispute resolution, and accountability is to the rule, not to persons.

These kinds of organizations are called bureaucracies. While bureaucracies can exhibit 'pathologies' and become dysfunctional, the basic principles of bureaucracies are what underlie the rule of law that defines the Western state. Ultimately, the collection of the rules, or laws, that define and describe a bureaucratic organization and the behaviours required from its members allow us to see the organization as separate from the people who participate in it.

A network- or relationship-based organization is a very different type of organization, one that is quite amorphous and dynamic and cannot be separate from the people who compose it or the process of composing. Social networks and the associated body of analytics known as social network analysis have been centre stage in national defence arenas in the recent decades. Terrorist organizations have been characterized as networks, and new strategies developed to 'fight' them. As Arquilla famously

said of al-Qaeda in his blog posting of 25 August 2002, "It takes networks to fight networks, much as in previous wars it has taken tanks to fight tanks."

Social networks are patterns of connection among actors, much as we saw in Figure 4. The focus in a network is on the actors, the linkages between the actors, and what those linkages (or large sets of linkages) can tell us about how the actors function. Social networks are highly dynamic, as individuals are constantly making and breaking connections.

No organization is either a purely bureaucratic or network-based organization. There is no bureaucracy without active relationship-based networks (every military person has a 'go to' guy to call), and there is no relationship-based organization without some level of formalism, however minimal (even al-Qaeda, in its early days, developed a position-based structure, identifying a need for a financial manager, for example, or an enforcer of Shari'a law). Turnley's monograph, *Retaining a Precarious Value,* described the tension that arose (and is still present) for the American SOF community, a primarily relationship-based community, with the establishment of USSOCOM, a bureaucratically defined institution:

> Prior to 1986/7, SOF were perceived as a loosely coupled group defined by a capability, held together by a core quality that enabled its defining capability, and located *by design* outside of mainstream activity. After 1986/7, the presence and activities of USSOCOM set up a tension in which this group of special operations personnel (SOF) was pulled toward mainstream activity through an institutional replica of other unified commands and of the services.[87]

Testimony from one of the habeas corpus hearings of one of the Guantanamo Bay detainees revealed the legal teams and the judge

struggling to understand what 'belonging' to a highly relationship-based organization like al-Qaeda really means.[88] A good part of the testimony in this particular hearing was devoted to the question of whether the defendant 'belonged' to al-Qaeda. There is a great deal of discussion of whether or not the defendant ever swore an oath of loyalty (*bayat*) to al-Qaeda, and what that meant, followed by testimony by the government which said that:

> …the determination of whether an individual is "part of" al-Qaida must be made on a case-by-case basis by using a functional rather than a formal approach and by focusing upon the actions of the individual in relation to that organization.

In this case, the government recognized the need to explore relationships to determine connection to the organization rather than default to a more formal definition of membership. It is interesting to note that the testimony includes a quote from a previous district court hearing in which the court used the term 'fellow traveler'[89] to describe the detainee, a term from the Cold War era referring to a Communist sympathizer who was not a full 'card carrying member' of the Communist Party. Clearly, shifting paradigms is hard.

The tension between bureaucracies and relationship-based organizations exemplifies a thread that has run throughout this monograph. This is, as we said earlier, a messy business. There are no 'right answers' in the world of cross-cultural engagement, just alternative perspectives, mission or task requirements, and the choices about engagement strategies they allow. This section introduced several concepts that should stimulate a challenging look at ourselves as well as others. It was designed as an introduction to what it means to 'think differently' in a cross-cultural context. The discussion presented constructs to look at 'cultures' both as things-in-the-world and as emergent from social processes.

As Casmir said, "Cultures are created by and exist within, and eventually between, people, and they are externally represented by those institutions, artifacts and norms which become influential cultural icons and, which in turn, influence their creators."[90] Berger and Kellner, cited in Rouleau, put it another way, arguing that "Every human institution is, as it were, a sedimentation of meanings or, to vary the image, a crystallization of meanings in objective form."[91] Paying attention to both 'influential cultural icons' and significant behaviours will help us understand how, where, and why those icons exert influence. Describing that richness, the 'crystallization of meanings in objective form,' is what Geertz meant by thick description.

> *Effective intercultural communication practice is not persuasion, but an effort to understand one's partner and enhance meaningful dialogue.*
>
> *Hopson, et al. 2012*

Path forward

This discussion began by describing a world increasingly characterized by irregular warfare-type engagements. This focus has pushed state-run militaries to more consistent and higher profile use of their special operations forces. Irregular warfare, drawing on the French colonial tradition of war in Africa, generally requires a significant degree of engagement of the military with indigenous populations. This entanglement, in turn, has highlighted the need for the development and use of a capability critical to SOF's success: cross-cultural competence. SOF must be able to understand how others operate so as to effectively engage with and leverage individuals from other cultures, whether they be from elsewhere in the world, or elsewhere in government or other sectors. A cross-cultural perspective, a critical look at ourselves and others, shows that:

- Cultures are both visible and invisible. Culture is the meaning embodied in behaviour and artifacts. While it is the invisible, the meaning, in which we really are interested, the only path to it is through the visible, through observations and production of behaviour.

- Cultures are shared although individually presented. They are phenomena of groups, but manifested through the behaviour of individuals.

- Cultures are always changing. This is particularly important to remember in a search for regional knowledge from experts or expatriates. The world they knew 'back home' or last visited sometimes decades ago may be very different from the world we will encounter on a visit today. Behaviours can change quickly – just try following tastes in popular music, or understanding the fashion sense of a generation behind you, or the slang vocabulary that has developed in a neighborhood. And although deep-seated values and paradigmatically-based views of the world (such as attitudes towards privacy, power, or modesty, beliefs about the nature of God and the power of the family) will change more slowly, they still will change.

- Cultures change over space. While this may appear to be obvious when we think about the space between North American and the Middle East, it also holds for the space between the East Coast and the West Coast of Canada or the United States, and between my neighborhood and yours. Vancouver, British Columbia, is different in some meaningful ways from Toronto, Ontario. And what makes it different is that there are different people engaging in different ways in my neighborhood and yours.

Understanding others is not easy – and even understanding what understanding others means, what it means to be cross-culturally competent, is not easy. However, the development of cross-cultural competence does not necessarily require significant resources or trips to lands far away. Perhaps counterintuitively, understanding others better begins with ourselves, with the development of deeper self-awareness, an effort that can begin without leaving our home towns.

While the jury is still out on the specifics and the relative importance of the contribution of personality traits to cross-cultural competence, the literature suggests with some certainty that there is some contribution. Various instruments such as the Global Competencies Inventory[92] will test for some of these traits. Some special operations components such as the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), which includes the Army Special Forces, subject recruits to a battery of personality tests based on research performed by Abbe and others which include dimensions related to cross-cultural competence.[93] Interviews with Special Forces' selection and assessment personnel showed that they emphasized the importance of recruits' ability to deal with social, ethical and other types of situational ambiguity.[94] Most of the selection and assessment along this dimension was performed experientially, putting candidates under stress and assessing performance. Turnley's manuscript on cross-cultural competence in American SOF describes this more fully for all American SOF components, although it is the Army's Special Forces that is most fully invested in the cross-cultural requirement.[95]

Once a cadre is selected for some constellation of personality traits, there are some general steps that can be taken to move toward competency. The following list focuses on the development of a culture-general perspective as there are well-known strategies for acquiring regional or behavioural knowledge. This list is

intended as a general guide and there is much detail and nuance that can be developed around each point.

- *Become motivated.* Becoming interculturally or cross-culturally competent begins with motivation. A clear sense of the role that intercultural engagement plays in irregular warfare needs to be communicated to all military personnel and reinforced by senior leadership. (Alternatively, an awareness of the role of cross-cultural engagement could be part of the selection criteria for organization such as SOF.) There must be a desire to invest the time and take the personal risk that is associated with these types of entanglements. The student must develop an understanding of the depths and dimensions of his own motivations in developing cross cultural competence. Recognition for outstanding performance in this dimension needs to be institutionalized through personnel actions and in public descriptions and commendations.[96]

- *Enhance cultural self-awareness.* A key early step towards increased cross-cultural competence is enhanced cultural self-awareness, requiring the student to reflect on his own experiences and on the image he projects. A key part of the effectiveness of local logics is their ability to make the world seem 'obvious,' or natural or 'the way things ought to be.' A useful beginning exercise is to force oneself to step out of the normalcy that our own cultural perspectives provide us. Writing a short (one-page) essay on some portion of normal daily activity as it might be seen from the perspective of someone who has just arrived from another part of the world is often a good start. For example, what might they see at a gym? A single-gendered population working very hard to accomplish what? Why do these particular people frequent this particular gym?

Why are there mirrors? Who talks to whom – and why are they making contact? What do logos on T-shirts say about the people who are wearing them? Why doesn't everyone wear them? This exercise, or something similar, will help to break the lens of normalcy that hides our own culture from ourselves. It will then allow us to start to pay attention to the parts of our surroundings that might look different elsewhere. Developing this dimension of what the military often calls 'situational awareness' is a key component of cross-cultural competence.

- S*pend time with people who are not like you – identify situations that 'jolt' you, study your own reactions.* This is an experiential exercise. Pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone before we need to is a good way to see how well we react to strangeness. Finding a 'Chinatown' or an area of the city where languages you know are not spoken and spending a day there is a good exercise. Buying lunch, asking for directions, and similar encounters should be part of the exercise. Upon returning home, write a short essay on what looks 'strange' and why.

- *Read and study culture-general perspectives and principles.* This is the step that requires the greatest cognitive investment and often is mostly classroom time. Students can take an anthropology class. Read fiction written by non-Western writers. Learn about religions outside of their own. Study non-Western philosophies. Throughout this exercise it is important to remember that the goal is not to persuade oneself or seek to convert one's beliefs. The goal is not to go native. The goal of this step is to gain an appreciation for the belief structures of others, to begin to see that other logics are possible and can be highly motivating.

- *Learn about a region, learn a language.* This is learning about behaviours. It usually requires classroom time (particularly for language learning), attendance at lectures by regional experts, and time spent reading. The student should keep in mind that region-specific training often focuses on what is different, where effective cross-cultural engagement often begins by identifying similarities.

All the steps outlined here can be performed well by anyone. Those with personality traits more suited to the competency will find these exercises easier and more comfortable. Others will need to exercise determination, focus, and other traits for which SOF also select to succeed at these exercises, and may be more likely to fail to exercise the competency when under stress.

Conclusion

The challenge for us, as we leave the comfort of our own institutions and communities and become entangled with others, is to recognize the organizing principles that are helping to define the basis of their identity, the differences that matter to them. They usually are implicit and most people cannot articulate them. But it is these assumptions that drive behaviour, that push us into connections with some and away from connections with others. These connections form webs of social relations that are constantly changing and reforming. The parts of the webs believed locally important are captured and presented through the stability provided by institutions and other patterns.

So how do we know which is a wink or a twitch? Would we recognize mockery if it played in front of us in Afghanistan? Or invitations to conspiracies if we were signaled in Sri Lanka? Clearly the meaning embodied in Geertz's short vignette is not an object-in-the-world, something that can be observed and measured.

The contraction of the eyelids is. The wink or the parody or the invitation to conspiracy, the interpretation of that behaviour, cannot. As we said earlier, the logics of meaning are made present through behaviours, but they are not the behaviours. That said, although we are most concerned with the meaning of the eyelid contraction in Geertz's story, without the physical activity, the behaviour, there would be no story at all. Although the 'prize' in irregular warfare or counter-insurgency activities may ultimately be the investment of the local people in some preferred regime, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), ambushes, and sniper attacks are an important part of the way insurgent or revolutionary behaviour plays out.

Engagement with structures of meaning is not something we can choose to do. As I observe the eyelid contracting, I immediately impute meaning to it. A roadside IED is not simply a detonation of explosive materials. It is a hostile or defensive act, depending upon the side of the conflict which provides the label. A search of women in a household can simultaneously be a necessary security precaution or a violation of modesty and honour. The observation and the imputation of meaning are simultaneous and inseparable.

'Culture' is a perspective, a frame of reference, a set of glasses we always wear but to which we usually pay no attention. The interesting questions arise when we borrow our friends' eyeglasses – or, even more challenging – our enemies' eyeglasses and attempt to make sense of the world the way they do.

Every engagement is consequential from cultural standpoint. I reply to the boy's wink with a wink of my own. The conspiracy begins. Or in a fit of pique, I decide to parody it with a grotesque wink of my own, and he comes at me with fists up. But what happens if I kill a child in a 'friendly' village on a night raid and fail to pay the blood money expected of me to compensate for a loss?

Or, in the process of searching a house for a high value target, enter a room in which there are women and I am ignorant of the modesty traditions of the region? I do not *have* to pay the blood money or follow the modesty traditions (which might preclude me searching a room in which there are unmarried women), but it should be an informed choice. I should be sufficiently cross-culturally competent to see the signals that tell me something is wrong, and have the ability to elicit from others what they see as appropriate behaviour.

Cross-cultural competence depends upon a combination of personality traits, learned capabilities and cognitive perspectives, and acquired behavioural skills. Just as our entré into culture began with the contraction of the lid of a boy's right eyelid and descended into constructs of meaning around winks and twitches and patterns of interaction captured in organizations and institutions, so does the demonstration of cross-cultural competence begin with the social patterns and patterns of meaning, and end with locally specific behaviours. The student of cross-cultural competence must be motivated to learn and perform – he must see the value of the competence in his general activity domain. Once motivated, he must turn to himself, to enhance his own self-awareness, develop his own cognitive capabilities, and learn new behaviours. Some of this development is classroom learning, other is experiential. All is designed to help the student productively shape interactions with others, whether those others be within his own community (such as other parts of his own government) or from communities elsewhere in the world.

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NOTES

1   Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber, *Operational Culture For The Warfighter: Principles And Applications*. (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 15.

2   Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation Of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books), 13.

3   Ibid., 7.

4   Ibid.

5   United States Government, Department of Defense, JP-1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States 25 March 2013. (Washington, DC, 2013), Epigram to Chapter 1, Quote from General George H. Decker, US Army Chief of Staff, 1960-1962, I-1.

6   Ibid., I-6.

7   United States Government, Department of Defense, JP-1, I-6; *United States Government, Department of Defense. Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats. Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0* 17 May 2010 (Washington, DC, 2010), 9.

8   United States Government, Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Joint Operating Concept*, 9.

9   United States Government, Department of Defense, JP3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC, 2013), xi.

10   United States Government, Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual*. U.S. Army FM3-24. With forewords by General David H. Patreaeus and Lt. General James F. Amos, and by Lt. Colonel John A. Nagl; with a new introduction by Sarah Sewall. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-113.

11   'Regime' is a collection of institutions (themselves structures and processes) that provides a governance function for a group of people. It may or may not be institutionalized as a nation-state. Areas such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are governed by an indigenous kinship-based regime, in addition to the governance the Pakistan government provides.

12   United States Government, Department of Defense, JP-1, I-6.

13   United States Government, Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare: Joint Operating Concept*, 5.

14   Thomas Rid. "The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (2010), 733, quoting Prussian Major General Carl von Decker after a trip to Algeria in 1840.

15   Ibid., 740, citing H. Ideville, *Le Maréchal Bugeaud, d'après sa correspondance intime et des documents inédites* 1784–1849, 3 vols., Vol. III (Paris 1882), 137-138.

16   Douglas Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey: The Development of French Colonial Warfare," in Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 376-377.

17   Rid. "Nineteenth Century Origins," 753.

18   See Jessica Glicken Turnley, *Cross Cultural Competence and Small Groups: Why SOF Are the Way SOF Are* (Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University, USSOCOM 2011) for discussion of the inclusion of criteria to assess cross-cultural competence in the selection process for Army Special Forces in particular.

19   Porch, "Bugeaud, Galliéni, Lyautey," 382.

20   Rid, "Nineteenth Century Origins," 750, quoting from Joseph Simon Gallieni, *Neuf ans à Madagascar* (Paris, France: Librairie Hachette, 1908), 47.

21   David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger [1964] 2006).

22   David H. Patreaeus, forward to *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps counterinsurgency field manual. U.S. Army FM3-24*. United States Government, Department of the Army (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xix.

23   United States Government, Government Accountability Office, *Special Operations Forces: Opportunities Exist to Improve Transparency of Funding and Assess Potential to Lessen Some Deployments* GAO-15-571 (2015), 8.

24   Ibid., 14; Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). National Defense Budget Estimates for FY14 (May 2014) accessed January 2016.http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2014/FY14_Green_Book.pdf Exact budget numbers are difficult to calculate for a variety of reasons, including the lack of transparency into the funds that the services spend on their respective special operations components (a problem described in these reports). But the numbers reported here give an idea of the relative magnitude of special operations and the full military in the U.S.

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