ATP 3-24.3

# Cultural and Situational Understanding

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# Cultural and Situational Understanding

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# Preface

ATP 3-24.3, *Cultural and Situational Understanding*, establishes the techniques and procedures used by individuals, teams, and units of the United States Army at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. This ATP is applicable to all members of the Army profession and security assistance contractors. The techniques and procedures prescribed in this publication are used when engaging other government agencies, indigenous populations and institutions, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and other military and nonmilitary entities to support conventional and special operations missions. This publication elaborates on doctrine contained in FM 3-24, *Insurgency and Countering Insurgencies*.

The principal audience for ATP 3-24.3 is all members of the profession of arms. Commanders and staffs of Army headquarters serving as joint task force or multinational headquarters should also refer to applicable joint or multinational doctrine concerning the range of military operations and joint or multinational forces. Trainers and educators throughout the Army will also use this publication.

Commanders, staffs, and subordinates ensure their decisions and actions comply with applicable United States, international, and in some cases, host-nation laws and regulations. Commanders at all levels ensure their Soldiers operate in accordance with the law of war and the rules of engagement. (See FM 27-10.)

ATP 3-24.3 uses joint terms where applicable.

ATP 3-24.3 applies to the Active Army, Army National Guard/Army National Guard of the United States, and United States Army Reserve unless otherwise stated.

The proponent of ATP 3-24.3 is the United States Army Combined Arms Center. The preparing agency is the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, United States Army Combined Arms Center. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 (*Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms*) to Commander, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, ATTN: ATZL-MCD (ATP 3-24.3), 300 McPherson Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2337; by e-mail to usarmy.leavenworth.mccoe.mbx.cadd-org-mailbox@mail.mil; or submit an electronic DA Form 2028.

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# Introduction

Understanding culture is essential in conducting irregular warfare. Irregular warfare requires a deliberate application of an understanding of culture due to the need to understand a populated operational environment, what specifically is causing instability, the nature of the threat, and the ability to work with host-nation governments and security forces. Often, training and operations rely on cultural training and education to build cultural expertise, but this may not provide the cognitive link to situational understanding. This ATP does not simply focus on culture, which often generalizes aspects of a society, does not account for diversity, and rarely represents a specific working identity (as in useful and relevant identity, which is distilled or created for a purpose) for an entire region, nation, or even an area. Alternatively, this publication builds on doctrinal publications, including ADRP 5-0 and FM 3-24, which detail terms and references regarding culture and help link these foundations to situational understanding.

Situational understanding facilitates Soldiers' and leaders' abilities to make informed decisions regarding their area of operations because of their recognizing "what looks right" and "what looks wrong." This ATP covers the basics of one aspect of enhancing situational understanding through cultural understanding, and links these basics to methodologies and training tools to more rapidly gain cultural understanding through a deliberate process, rather than simply gaining awareness through learned patterns by immersion in a community or area of operations.

Leaders at every level need to emphasize cultural training and understanding. Developing expertise in cultural and geopolitical knowledge, understanding, and application are requirements for all Army professionals and leaders and one of the four fields of knowledge of professional military expertise. (See ADP 1.) A deliberate, synchronized and coherent plan to develop cultural expertise is vital. If leaders set the standard, their Soldiers will follow. Leaders are expected to be culturally and situational aware. They will conduct and participate in meetings, negotiations, and other exchanges with host-nation citizens in which cultural and situational understanding are essential to influence target audiences. Obtaining keen situational awareness will also help leaders recognize and understand the prerequisites of insurgency in their area of operations, enemy patterns, how insurgents use prerequisites of insurgency to get close to the local population, and ways counterinsurgents can separate insurgents from the local population.

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction to Cultural and Situational Understanding

"An army without culture is a dull-witted army, and a dull-witted army cannot defeat the enemy."

Mao Tse-tung

## OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL AND SITUATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

1-1. Cultural understanding is the basis of comprehending the different dimensions of culture. Cultures vary according to key elements such as interpersonal relations, concepts of time, attitudes, tolerance and authority, values, beliefs, behaviors, and norms. Situational understanding, the product of applying analysis and judgment to relevant information to determine the relationships among the operational and mission variables to facilitate decision making, underpins effective, unified operations. Obtaining situational understanding during planning and execution of operations in an uncertain, complex, and ambiguous operational environment is essential to mission success as it facilitates commanders' abilities to continuously assess, act, and respond decisively in achieving mission accomplishment and maintaining force protection. Moreover, an ability to achieve situational understanding is enhanced by several variables, including cultural understanding, which is attained by developing the appropriate skills through education and training. This ATP explores these fundamental topics and provides questions for each, which result in the methodology for linking cultural education, training, and understanding to gain situational understanding. (See CJCSI 3126.01A for more information on cultural planning and sourcing.)

1-2. Fighting an enemy that frequently hides among the population is one of the things that makes irregular warfare unique. To fight and overcome this enemy, counterinsurgents, in an effort to gain situational understanding, must achieve awareness, recognizing what looks and feels right and wrong. Situational understanding facilitates decision making at every level, whether tactical, operational, or strategic. Situational awareness aids counterinsurgents in avoiding ambushes, negotiating with local leaders, working with the host-nation security forces, and detecting insurgent underground cells within the population.

1-3. All societies are composed of both a dynamic social structure and a culture. A social structure refers to the relations among groups of persons within a system of groups. Social structure is persistent over time. It is regular and continuous despite disturbances. While social structure does change, it changes over a long period, and its change is characterized by evolution, not dramatic change. In a military organization, for example, the structure comprises the arrangement into groups such as brigades, regiments, and battalions. In a society, the social structure includes groups, institutions, organizations, and networks. Social structure involves the following:

- Arrangement of the parts that constitute society.
- Organization of social positions.
- Distribution of the local population within those positions.

1-4. Staffs should identify and analyze the culture of the society as a whole and of each major group within the society. Social structure comprises the relationships among groups, institutions, and individuals within a society. In contrast, culture—ideas, norms, rituals, and codes of behavior–-provides meaning to individuals within the society. For example, families are a core institutional building block of social structure everywhere. However, marital monogamy, expectations of a certain number of children, and willingness to live with in-laws are highly variable in different societies. They are matters of culture. Social structure resembles a skeleton with culture being the muscle on the bones. The two are mutually dependent and reinforcing. A change in one results in a change in the other.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

1-5. Culture is dynamic. It is a web of meaning shared by members of a particular society or group within a society. Culture is—

- A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another.
- Learned through a process called enculturation or socialization.
- Shared by members of a society; there is no culture of one.
- Patterned, meaning that people in a society live and think in ways forming definite, repeating patterns.
- Changeable, through social interactions between people and groups.
- Variable, meaning that Soldiers should make no assumptions regarding what a society considers right and wrong or good and bad.
- Internalized, in the sense that it is habitual, taken for granted, and perceived as natural by people within the society.

1-6. Culture can be described as an operational code that is valid for an entire group of people. Culture conditions the individual's range of action and ideas, including what to do and not do, how to do or not do it, and whom to do it with or not to do it with. Culture includes the circumstances under which the rules shift and change. Culture influences how people make judgments, assess what is important and unimportant, categorize things, and work with things that do not fit into categories. Cultural rules are flexible in practice. For example, the kinship system of a certain Amazonian Indian tribe requires that individuals marry a cousin. However, in some cultures, marrying one's cousin is important given that it has more to do with keeping wealth (and land ownership) within the family or clan than it is about the individuals who will be marrying. In this sense, some cultures are collectivist in nature (meaning that the good of the group takes precedence over the good of the individual), whereas others are individualistic (meaning that the good of the individual takes precedence over the good of the group).

1-7. Individuals belong to multiple groups, through birth, assimilation, or achievement. Each group to which individuals belong influences their beliefs, values, attitudes, and perceptions. Individuals consciously or unconsciously rank their identities into primary and secondary identities. Primary identities are frequently national, racial, and religious. In contrast, secondary identities may include such things as hunter, blogger, or coffee drinker. Frequently, individuals' identities are in conflict; counterinsurgents can use these conflicts to influence key leaders' decisions.

1-8. Structure and culture relies on relationships to create a group norming effect on an individual, called enculturation. Relationships, whether based on family, economic (such as class), tribal, ethnic, racial, religious, or other ties, affect how an individual views the world. Both social structure and culture help shape a person's identity, and in turn, helps shape that person's legitimacy.

1-9. The normalization effect of groups also provides social norms for individuals. The standard of conduct for social roles is known as a social norm. A social norm is what people are expected to do or should do, rather than what people actually do. Norms may be either moral (including prohibitions on theft and homicide) or customary (including prayer before a meal and removing shoes before entering a house). Violation of a role prescribed by a given status, such as failing to feed one's children, results in social disapproval. When a person's behavior does not conform to social norms, the society may sanction a person. Understanding the roles, statuses, and social norms of groups within an area of operations can clarify expected behaviors and provide guidelines on how to act. Some norms that may impact military operations include the following:

- The requirement for revenge if honor is lost.
- Appropriate treatment of women and children.
- Common courtesies, such as gift giving.
- Local business practices, such as bribes and haggling.
- Policies on counterinsurgents entering places of worship.
- The concept of time.

- Greetings and use of hand gestures.
- Daily patterns of life.
- Dealing with strangers.

1-10. An individual can be a member of more than one group, and groups within an area, even groups with some of the same members, can be in conflict. Counterinsurgents strive to understand the friction points between different groups. Friction points are based on religious, racial, gender, or some other form of cultural identity in a society. Commanders and staffs can understand conflict and cultural change by understanding internal friction points within a society. Different values are often friction points.

1-11. The size of a nation, its diverse subcultures, its different educational levels, and its geographic backgrounds contribute to a great range of cultural variances among individuals and groups. Members of a nation view cultural influences differently depending on their geographic location or identifying group. Analyzed and understood together, cultural influences provide a snapshot of a culture. Developing relevant questions about cultural influences enables commanders and staffs to achieve greater situational understanding.

1-12. Values can be defined as those deeply held beliefs that are important to a culture, an organization or an individual. As an example, the Army values are part of the Army's professional Army Ethic. Values may include beliefs concerning such topics as tolerance, stability, prosperity, social change, and self-determination. Each group a person belongs to inculcates that person with its values and their ranking of importance. Individuals do not absorb all the values of the groups they belong to. They accept some and reject others. Most individuals belong to more than one social group. The values of each group are often in conflict: religious values may conflict with generational values, or gender-specific values may conflict with organizational practices.

1-13. One can decode a culture's belief system by observing and analyzing its cultural forms. Each culture constructs or invents its own cultural forms through which cultural meanings are transmitted and reproduced. Cultural forms include rituals, symbols, ceremonies, myths, music, and narratives. Cultural forms are the medium for communicating ideologies, values, and norms that influence thought and behavior. Insurgent groups frequently use local cultural forms to mobilize the population.

1-14. One of the most important cultural forms to understand is the cultural narrative, which is frequently expressed in folklore, literature, ballads, and myths. A cultural narrative is a story recounted as a causally linked set of events that explains an event in a group's history and expresses the values, character, or self-identity of the group. People express and absorb ideologies through narratives. For example, at the Boston Tea Party in 1773, Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty dumped five tons of tea into the Boston Harbor to protest what they considered unfair British taxation. This narrative explains in part why the Revolutionary War began. However, it tells Americans something about them each time they hear the story that fairness, independence, and justice are worth fighting for. As this example indicates, narratives may not conform to historical facts, or they may drastically simplify facts to clearly express basic cultural values. For example, the British taxed Americans in 1773 less than their British counterparts, and most British attempts to raise revenues from the colonies were designed to help reduce the crushing national debt incurred in their defense. By listening to narratives, one can identify a society's core values. Commanders should pay particular attention to cultural narratives of the host-nation population pertaining to outlaws, revolutionary heroes, and historical resistance figures. Insurgents may use these narratives to mobilize the population.

1-15. Other cultural forms include ritual and symbols. Rituals can be either sacred or secular. Vast amounts of information are found in symbols, and a knowledgeable observer can decode the information. Symbols can be objects, activities, words, relationships, events, or gestures. Institutions and organizations often use cultural symbols to amass political power or develop resistance against external groups. For example, the members of the local population may mark their houses as being affiliated with insurgents or local government authorities by using coded symbols. Commanders should pay careful attention to the meaning of common symbols and how various groups use them.

# LEARNED BEHAVIOR AS A COMPONENT OF CULTURE

1-16. The baseline definition of culture indicates that learned behaviors are an essential component of culture. Learned behavior in this sense can mean almost anything; the way a person dresses, the way a person speaks, or the food a person eats are indicative of an individual's socialization into a specific culture. Whenever individuals brush their teeth, cross their legs, send birthday cards, kiss someone, listen to music, or choose a form of recreation, they are practicing learned behaviors that are a part of their culture. These learned behaviors encompass all aspects of life and include attitudes toward—

- Specific people (such as family members, lovers or spouses, teachers, and friends).
- Authority figures (such as military superiors or police officers).
- Small social groups.
- Large social groups.
- Eating and food preparation.
- Work or production.
- Home building, maintenance, and cleaning.
- Recreation and relaxation.

1-17. Behaviors do not always define a culture. Frequently, there are more telling cultural signs in the meaning attached to a behavior than in the actual behavior. For example, during the Vietnam War, everyone who wore black pajamas was not a member of the Vietcong. Similarly, although many modern urban Americans hunt, the significance of hunting for them is very different than it is for the Eskimo cultures above the Arctic Circle.

# SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AS AN ELEMENT OF CULTURE

1-18. One common characteristic of human societies is that they tend to become increasingly organized over time. Initially, most societies (or elements of societies) exist as small-scale systems, or micro systems. Such organizations might include family groups, work teams, or communal groups that share tasks and products. As societies become larger and more advanced, large-scale systems (or macro-systems) of social organization usually develop.

1-19. Systems of social organization grow out of their host culture and simultaneously change the host culture by becoming deeply embedded with it. The organizing systems that a society devises (or has imposed upon it) become a part of the system of cultural meanings for that society. For example, in U.S. culture, the basic premise is that all people are created equal and can advance according to their own merits. The U.S. economic system then allots a certain value to each person's productive role; therefore, citizens often are judged by the outward tokens of their advancement and value (such as houses, cars, clothes, and leisure pursuits). The organizational systems are, in this sense, inseparable from the cultural meaning systems. One cannot fully understand one without understanding the other.

## FAMILY

1-20. The term “family” refers to a group of individuals of common ancestry or group that is linked by marriage. In a less formal way, family may also be used to indicate a group of persons, generally sharing the same household, who live and work together to satisfy basic collective needs and goals. A key role of the family is to provide its offspring love, food, shelter, clothing, protection and to prepare its offspring to be functional members of the society in which they live.

1-21. The family is one of the most influential elements of social institutions. It is the starting point for the development of all other forms of social organization. Families teach human beings what is demanded of them in the real world; it is within the family unit where humans learn core values. A person's first experiences with power and authority occur within the family.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND KINSHIP

1-22. Kinship systems are the organizational structures of families and extended families, clans, tribes and so forth. There are several types of kinship structures including matrilineal (derived from a mother's lineage), patrilineal (from a father's lineage), and cognatic (lineage based on an ancestor or ancestors that could come from either the mother's or father's lineage). The name of the person may not be important, but instead, the title such as father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or grandmother, may be.

1-23. Kinship systems often code roles, responsibilities, authorities, powers, and rules of behavior for each position, each relationship, and each context. Kinship systems often answer the following types of questions:

- How do fathers treat children at home, at weddings, or at funerals?
- How do male youths behave with their uncles, as compared to their grandfathers, their cousins, and their aunts?
- How does behavior change from formal to informal contexts and from public to private contexts?
- Who influences and shapes who is in these webs of relations?
- Who is obligated to "take care of" or "distribute punishment and rewards" and to whom?
- Who has what kind of power and authority?
- How does the kinship power system compare to a business or military organizational chart and structure?
- How does the kinship power system compare to community, district, provincial and national organizational structures, or religious organizational structures (both formal and informal)?

1-24. There are webs of relationships among all members with some being very extensive. For example, a father may also be a son, a brother, an uncle, and a husband. Each person and each relationship has a different set of roles, responsibilities, behaviors, authorities, and powers attached to it. One person may control the family money and daily expenses, while another person may control big purchases, business or agricultural products, and property. One person may decide on the children's household chores. Another person may have authority over educational choices and enforce study behavior. Another person may enforce punishment for breaking the rules. Another person (or several people) may have power over marital decisions for family members and children. Another person may spoil the children. Another person may give specific advice and have close relations with the kinship group. Other people may have formal, tense, and often distant relations with the kinship group, such as the extended family of a married couple.

1-25. In some cases, kinship may influence individuals to join insurgencies or resist insurgencies. Insurgents may take advantage of kinship systems, and they may map their influencing abilities onto existing influence structures of kinship systems. They may present themselves in such a way (by posing as proxies or fictive kin members) to have the greatest influence on the select target group. (Fictive kinship describes forms of kinship that are not based on marriage or blood.)

1-26. Counterinsurgents may also take advantage of kinship systems. Fictive kinship development (for insurgents or counterinsurgents) can be a very powerful tool and enable mission success and force protection, if done properly. If counterinsurgents are seen as community cousins, for example, or family members of a community, their security may increase significantly. Fictive kinship may also increase counterinsurgents' abilities to shape and influence the population. For example, if insurgents are increasingly portrayed as "not family" or "typically avoided family members," they may be more likely to be isolated socially and psychologically.

1-27. Knowing social organizational structure and kinship systems and how they operate allows counterinsurgents to increase awareness and situational understanding. For example, is hiring a family member or putting a family member in a political post normal, and if so, why? The reasons may not be ethical in a United States (U.S.) or European system, but hiring a family member may be expected and considered appropriate and ethical in the local culture. Counterinsurgents should try to work within local practices instead of resisting and condemning them. Counterinsurgents should use situational understanding and leverage their knowledge of the systems and relations in a local population to improve force protection and mission success.

## RELIGION

1-28. Religion is more than just a belief in a deity; it is a philosophy and a way of life. Religion can define who people are, how they view the world around them, and how they interact. In every society, people have searched for "the meaning of life." The need to understand why things happen and what will happen in the future is an ongoing drive that continues to shape people's beliefs and values.

### Religion as a Component of Culture

1-29. Religion is a component of culture. At its most basic level, religion is both the individual and communal expression of contact with supernatural forces. Although it is common for individual practice to be considered important, most religious people also choose to meet with others of similar beliefs. Expressing a common religious understanding helps people to make sense of the events and issues of their lives by providing explanations for human suffering, natural disasters, broken relationships, inequality, and death. Many religions also provide a belief in life after death.

1-30. All societies have some variety of religion. This is typically a set of sacred beliefs and rituals that control the members by providing a common understanding of moral codes and proper conduct. Not all religions have a supernatural basis. The Marxism-Leninism ideology is often cited as a secular belief that has all the salient characteristics of religion, including the demand for faith. Similarly, some contemporary forms of environmentalism are nearly indistinguishable from ancient forms of earth worship and incorporate forms of priesthood and the recognition of a godlike Earth.

1-31. If a society is insulated for long enough, the beliefs and customs tend to become harmonious and interdependent. However, these concepts frequently appear to lose their influence when changes occur rapidly and frequently. For example, a contemporary social problem in Western society is the breakdown of common understandings—particularly moral understandings—brought about by the last 50 years of rapid societal transformation. In other cases, these beliefs may become stronger, more fundamental, and more extreme in the face of significant change, as in the case of segments of Islamic and Hindu societies in the past 30 years. These beliefs may then clash with more modern and secular approaches.

1-32. In simple agricultural communities, such as the northern Philippines, everyone tends to do a part of all essential activities and everyone tends to have similar views of life. The activities and behavior of any one man or woman is almost indistinguishable from any other man or woman in the community. In such societies, each person performs the same rituals for the security of the crops and for a sense of inner wellbeing. The concept of gods and the notions of good and bad conduct are very much the same for everyone in the community. A Soldier or advisor who learns about any one member of such a society learns a great deal about every member of that entire society.

1-33. In complex societies, labor is divided by specialization. No single person does more than a small part of the necessary tasks of a community. The people who participate in this division of labor are not homogeneous (as is the case with more self-sufficient, primitive societies) and because no single person understands the entire process, individuals rely upon one another to accomplish tasks. The ideas and understandings of any one member of an advanced society do not have the "completeness" that is typical of a more self-sufficient society.

1-34. Since religion is such an integral part of culture, careful mission preparation and analysis should examine the religions and religious groups in an area of operations. Most of the people in the world practice religion, and many take it very seriously. Religious beliefs, leaders, and institutions are central to the worldview of many societies. Counterinsurgents should consider the impact of religion on a local population when planning any operation.

### Common Religious Themes

1-35. For purposes of this ATP, it is impractical to include an in-depth analysis of every world religion. Although each religion has different beliefs, number of adherents, and spheres of influence, most religions share six common dimensions:

- Doctrine.
- Myth.

- Ethics.
- Ritual.
- Experience.
- Social organization.

***Doctrine***

1-36. Religious doctrine is the collection of teachings of a faith tradition. Doctrine permits religious groups to reference their beliefs and pass them on to others. It provides a body of teaching that can be communicated to successive generations. The monotheistic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are replete with doctrine. These faiths use sacred texts not only to record their doctrine, but also as the primary bases of authority. Other belief systems, such as animism, have little if any formal doctrine.

***Myth***

1-37. It is important to understand that in the academic field of religious studies, the term myth carries no overtone of falsehood. The religious connotation of myths describes the narrative stories of a faith tradition that capture the truths of common belief among believers. Most religions have myths that share the essence of their beliefs with others. Although many religious myths appear primitive, they can be very effective tools in passing on the primary content of faith traditions. Such stories serve as effective vehicles to remember truths and events.

***Ethics***

1-38. Ethics is the study of what is right and wrong (including philosophy, theology, and law). Morals are beliefs about what is right and wrong, normally manifested in one's conscience and based upon one's societal and personal values. Religions have a set of moral principles guiding the decisions and actions of its faithful believers, known collectively as an ethic. These moral codes, the ethic of a religious faith, provide the boundaries to govern the behavior of believers. The term ethics describes how a group labels actions as either moral (right) or immoral (wrong). As an example, all of the major religions of the world believe murder is immoral and a violation of their codes of ethics.

***Ritual***

1-39. Most religions make sacred certain spaces, times, persons, things, and events in worship. In this context, “sacred” means holy, separate, or special. Religions attempt to affect transactions between humans and supernatural forces. Rituals are the evidence of these transactions and represent the collective and accepted ways of approaching this interaction. They are repeated in sequence and kind for continuity. Sacred persons and symbols have power and value within faith traditions.

***Experience***

1-40. Religious individuals and groups report that their traditions provide vivid and lasting experiences with supernatural forces. Participants believe with conviction that they experience the supernatural and also transcend this world's limitations to reach heights of knowledge, bliss, insight, and understanding. Many traditions offer trancelike escapes from the problems of the world and allow individuals to experience temporary exposure to realms beyond this world.

***Social Organization***

1-41. Religions provide individuals an understanding or explanation of the supernatural. Religious traditions unite individuals into groups and institutionalize their collective faith in social forms, usually in organizations or congregations with established hierarchies.

## Impact of Religion

1-42. In almost every society, the followers of the dominant religious traditions have a strong societal impact. This influence may be exerted at varying degrees upon the environment's individual citizens, sections of society, the economy, the military, and the political structure.

### *Individual Impact*

1-43. Religions impact individuals by addressing age-old questions about identity and purpose. These questions of identity and purpose provide challenges to an individual's perspective. Religions provide the framework to answer these questions and provide personal moral codes for behavior. Some religions may provide a sense of hope, while others impart feelings of resignation.

### *Social Impact*

1-44. Religions help to define community for subgroups of larger societies. The belief systems of religious groups provide the normative codes of conduct for group members. Religions can serve to legitimize or disqualify leaders of a society based on their practices and personal lifestyles. Religions often serve as the primary collectors and maintainers of scholarship. Capable of weathering social change, many religions and their institutions provide a degree of stability in the midst of shifting influence among other groups.

### *Economic Impact*

1-45. Most religions address the means by which their adherents should acquire, use, and distribute their resources. Participants are challenged with an obligation to care for the less fortunate and to support the collective effort of spreading their beliefs. Religions impact taxation, banking, and employment practices by dictating acceptable and prohibited forms of work and levels of profit. Religious tenets are considered in the formation of international agreements and often influence foreign economic policy.

### *Military Impact*

1-46. Religions may describe acceptable military conflicts, military service, acceptable military tactics and combatants, and the treatment of noncombatants and enemy prisoners of war. Religions enable groups to view their enemies as evil and their conflicts as mandated by a divine force. Many conflicts arise when groups are not permitted to practice their beliefs without restriction. Religions help to define the reasons why and when certain conflicts are deemed acceptable, and how these conflicts should and should not be fought.

### *Political Impact*

1-47. Religions may influence the rise or fall of political leaders, policies, and issues. Even in secular systems where the separation of church and state (similar to the Establishment Clause in the U.S.) is widely accepted and enforced, religious groups often wield tremendous political power. Many societies struggle to balance the desire to permit religious expression with the unwillingness to promote every religious group as valid. Political elites may practice a religion that is different from the majority of the population. As such, leaders often face scrutiny from religious groups for their beliefs and practices. In some nation-states, religious groups form political parties and are awarded seats of representation in the parliamentary governmental bodies based on the number of their adherents.

## The Study of Religion for Operational Purposes

1-48. Soldiers should approach the analysis of religious groups in an area of operations by remaining objective and keeping an open mind. Soldiers may draw from their experiences, but they should avoid judgmental conclusions. A thorough analysis of an area of operations should address the interaction of religious groups within and beyond the area of operations and the potential impact of these groups upon the mission and the force. Religious area studies should begin with a review of the history of the predominant religions in the region and the area of operations. Planners should attempt to trace the growth, influence, and changes that religious groups made over time.

1-49. A careful analysis should address how religious groups weathered social movements, global conflicts, and the postcolonial creation of nation-states. It is often possible to categorize the "winners" and "losers" of a conflict by their religious groups, because religious conflict with a violent dimension is typically virulent and long-lasting. Therefore, planners should analyze the historical perspective to fully understand the positions taken by religious groups and leaders.

***History or Background***

1-50. The unit chaplain should attempt to determine which religions are truly indigenous and which were introduced to the area of operations by peaceful migration of traders, by conflict or conquest, or by intentional missionary efforts. The unit chaplain should also attempt to track how religious groups have weathered the changes in the region.

***Leadership***

1-51. Counterinsurgents determine how the leaders of a religious group are selected, trained, ordained, rewarded, and disciplined. The centers of learning, bases of support, and missionary efforts of religious groups provide important clues about their political and social agendas. Charismatic leaders have caused groups to revolt and act on religious impulse to conduct acts of terrorism.

***Organization***

1-52. Counterinsurgents determine the levels of hierarchy for the religious groups. Counterinsurgents should describe the links between leaders and followers, leaders and other leaders (including informal leaders), and groups and subgroups, and they should identify if these links are formal or informal. Counterinsurgents should determine if cell groups meet without direction or if the meetings are controlled and scheduled. Counterinsurgents should identify the ties between the centers of learning and those in positions of power for religious groups and establish the chain of command for religious leaders, particularly those involved in negotiations or making pronouncements.

***Response to Society***

1-53. Counterinsurgents determine how the religious groups in the area of operations respond to their society. Sociologist Max Weber describes two types of responses to society that religious groups adopt: control or withdrawal. Some groups may choose to control the society to which they belong. These responses may include religious movements, secret societies, social protest movements, and political parties. Some groups attempt to withdraw from the surrounding society. These responses may include symbolic separation (by creating a subculture) and intentional segregation (for example, by creating a commune). A group's theology or beliefs may dictate if that group selects responses that call for active resistance or passive reform.

***Sites and Shrines***

1-54. Counterinsurgents identify the places of worship, sites of pilgrimage, memorial or commemoration sites, cemeteries, and other locations of veneration. These buildings, statues, and shrines may be listed on a preclusion list (according to the law of war). A preclusion list also keeps U.S. forces informed of possible locations of rallies, paths of pilgrimage or migration, and sensitive areas where maximum psychological effects might be achieved from an attack by enemy forces.

***Calendar***

1-55. Counterinsurgents note the normal days of worship. Counterinsurgents identify special holy days of festivals, feasts, fasts, celebrations, or services. They also note which festivals and observances suspend normal activity. Counterinsurgents determine special anniversaries that mark religious conquests, defeats, or reconciliations between groups and parties. They also observe and respect the different calendars used by different religions. For example, counterinsurgents should describe start times for operations and negotiations using several calendar dates.

***Tolerance***

1-56. Counterinsurgents should determine how tolerant group leaders and members are of other groups operating in their base of support, monitor members who exhibit bad behavior, and monitor the conversion of members to other traditions. Counterinsurgents should determine and describe how difficult it is to join or quit a group. Counterinsurgents identify if the beliefs of the group reinforce tolerance or exclusion toward those that differ. Counterinsurgents determine the impact of individual conversion or initiation on the family unit, especially if others choose not to join.

## THE STATE: A POLITICAL SYSTEM WITHIN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM

1-57. When cultures evolve into civilizations, one of the systems of social organization that typically develops and grows in complexity is government. Formal government (often referred to as the "state") has been most often associated with urban civilizations where the economy supported numerous specializations. City growth resulted from sustainable agriculture and technological development, and, as cities developed, social hierarchies emerged with identifiable elites. The increasing complexity of life in large communities required a state organization.

1-58. States are formed because of a number of factors working together. For example, as a population grows in a specific region, competition for space and resources also grows. Eventually, the need arises to create more complex organizations to govern effectively. The groups that organize most effectively to improve or to defend themselves gain an important advantage over their neighbors. Another common contributing factor is the specific challenges or opportunities presented by the environment. For example, a dry, but fertile flood plain might support wide-scale food production when properly irrigated, and a large irrigation project is best done by a state.

1-59. The ruling class should establish that the rule of the group or individual in power is beneficial, right, and necessary (or unavoidable). Rulers often attempt to establish a cultural association between the leadership position and the values of the dominant local religion.

1-60. Unlike the Federal Government of the U.S., many countries have only a single central government, and all governmental entities are extensions of it. Generally, such governments have the three following levels:

- A national government.
- Several regional entities (for example, states, cantons, districts, sectors, or provinces).
- Numerous municipalities.

1-61. Regional and municipal levels of government have no independent authority and may not, for example, levy taxes or establish budgets. Each level is an administrative extension of the next higher level. The fact that members of local governments are locally elected does not make them independent of the national central government, which exercises its authority through the sector or province.

1-62. Likewise, military authority may or may not be exercised directly by the central government. In some cases, the mid-level governmental chief or even the senior municipal authority may have military command authority. In other instances, the military is largely independent of civilian control at any level.

## CONFLICT AND DISPUTE HISTORIES

1-63. Conflict and dispute histories are indispensable. They may explain cycles of violence that exist in an area and those cycles can be long standing. Counterinsurgents should identify the different personnel involved in conflicts and disputes in the area of operations to provide insight on these disputes and the history of the area of operations. Multiple perspectives will provide a more holistic and objective look at the issue. Counterinsurgents look for the nature, status, and causes of various conflicts. Historic and ongoing disputes are concrete examples and reveal—

- How local populations categorize various kinds of disputes.
- The nature of disputes, especially their causes, actions and consequences, but including transgressions, retribution and reciprocity measures, sanctions, paybacks, and revenge behaviors.
- The nature of dispute resolution, or in many cases, the nature of dispute non-resolution-why disputes continue even if there is no observable active violence or negative actions.

1-64. Counterinsurgents should know about latent or dormant disputes, which could erupt into conflict and violence. The catalyst or cause for igniting dormant conflict may be as simple as a cultural insult, an elopement between members of non-friendly families, or the removal of government forces whose presence would otherwise deter active violence or retribution among families, clans, tribes or ethnic groups. This may even occur at the national and regional levels. For example, once the Soviet Union dissolved, many of the former Soviet Republics (11 of 12) agreed to join the Commonwealth of Independent States. In northern Afghanistan, within the Provinces of Konduz and Baghlan, the strengthening of Afghanistan National Army capabilities improved security, but tribal conflict and tensions continued due to poor governance. In certain areas of Afghanistan, dormant tribal conflicts and tensions escalated with the degradation of Afghanistan National Army capabilities.

1-65. Disputes may be family feuds, conflicts, or transgressions. They may be individual, clan, tribal, or ethnic disputes. Often only a few key families or even a few key individuals may be involved. However, the extended families, clans, tribes, or ethnic groups may be obliged to be involved for various reasons, including sympathetic grievances. Disputes may include individual and community disputes, individual and government disputes, community and government disputes, and community and big businesses disputes. Often marital, economic, property, social, religious, criminal, and resource transgressions are key factors in causes of disputes and conflicts. Civil and criminal disputes may be handled differently.

1-66. There may be traditional methods in which disputes are resolved. Families, clans, tribes or communities may negotiate for themselves or choose an unbiased negotiator to determine compensation. They may go to appropriate mediators for specific kinds of transgressions. They may bring transgressions up at community meetings and decide by consensus. They may consult a council of elders, fortune tellers, shamans, religious leaders, or spiritual practitioners. Resolution and compensation may follow well known rules of negotiation, payments, social apologies, gift or labor exchanges, avoidance behaviors, and punishments (including physical, economic, or social). In some cases, resolving conflict may entail marriage brokering. Some of the local customs for dispute resolution may seem very strange, backwards, and illogical to Americans and Europeans. However, the local customs may be completely appropriate and logical for local groups. Local systems may accomplish more than other systems, even the official judicial and government systems. This is frequently the case in rural developing countries.

1-67. Counterinsurgents should plan to leverage local individuals in reducing or resolving conflicts in their area of operations. Local individuals can serve as advisors to counterinsurgent units. A local cultural advisor could provide insight on how to solve issues such as Soldiers accidentally damaging crops and property or inadvertently insulting someone. Counterinsurgents should consult the local tribal leader in determining the best course of action or acceptable way to apologize, compensate, or resolve the problem, and on acceptable acts of making good or giving an equivalent for any loss, damage, or injury. If counterinsurgents consult with local leaders properly, they can gain advantages and strengthen friendships, trust, and relations. However, it is important that counterinsurgents understand what is customary and acceptable to avoid paying too much compensation and disrupting the local economy or system of reconciliation. A local advisor could also help identify who is considered the credible source for dispute resolution and the best ways to approach individual disputes.

1-68. For example, it may be appropriate for a commander and the commander's host-nation counterpart to make a formal public apology to a family for its loss during an operation and visit that family in person, accompanied by local religious and community leaders. This gesture does not necessarily mean an admission of guilt, but it is a recognition of the family's status and the family's loss. A visit may help leaders make arrangements for the appropriate type of funeral and to ensure respect for the family and community. Monetary compensation may be expected following negotiations. This compensation is not because a life was worth a certain amount of dollars, but because the loss of labor to the household was costly to the survival and welfare of other family members. The deceased probably had to work and take care of family members, provide for school and education, put food on the table, and work crops in the

field. Symbolic gifts may be appropriate as well. Exchanges of Song Dynasty plates in east Indonesia, for example, are more necessary than money in many cases. Honoring the ancestors of the transgressed may be extremely important in other cases.

1-69. When non-local groups or security forces are involved, the normal rules are ambiguous. It may be wise for counterinsurgents to determine appropriate rules with key leaders at the onset of operations. Counterinsurgents should seek examples from lessons-learned, historic cases, and local communities. Urban areas are more likely to resort to government processes, but these processes may leave out internally displaced persons, squatter settlements, paramilitary and militia groups, and poor communities. Generally, key respondents and local advisors will be able to provide advice, as these communities have concrete historic or ongoing examples about what to do and what not to do. Counterinsurgents can discuss potential "hypothetical" or "notional" cases and predetermine appropriate courses of action. Often, the U.S. military legal process is not explained to local leaders clearly and in advance. This can be a source of conflict.

1-70. Counterinsurgents should consider how security forces (local, non-local, and foreign) should or should not be involved. Counterinsurgents should consider how they can build capacity in the area of operations while conducting security force training and assistance. Counterinsurgents should consider courses of action if the local population's responsibilities for dispute intervention and their rules of engagement are different from that of counterinsurgent forces. Counterinsurgents should consider how they can avoid imposing counterinsurgent ideals onto them (and changing their culture), but also how counterinsurgents can avoid sacrificing their morals and standards. Counterinsurgents should identify universal humanitarian methods that synch with fundamentals to locally, nationally, and internationally acceptable standards and enhance those.

1-71. Sometimes the host-nation forces who are present in the area of operations do not know the local customs. In this case, training and assistance could include combined learning experiences from local communities. Again, counterinsurgents' knowledge of the local conflict histories, causes, and paths to resolution or escalation will aid them significantly. When counterinsurgents know the right people with the appropriate authorities, they are able to leverage them to come to better solutions while increasing their own force protection. Counterinsurgents use host-nation partners and U.S. military information support operations capabilities to make the locals aware of counterinsurgent and host-nation rules and policies. Counterinsurgents do not just tell them the rules, but explain why the rules are needed, using locally understandable analogies, examples, and idioms.

## RUNNING ESTIMATES

1-72. Counterinsurgents can place conflict histories, historical information, case studies, and lessons learned in their estimates of the area of operations to allow them to track information and make changes over time. This may lead to metrics to identify increased or decreased buy-in and services by the government. Planners may begin to see patterns, types, and the pre-existing conditions which will allow planners to better predict when conflict may occur and how to preemptively deter it or best handle it. This information can be passed along during reliefs in place or transfers of authority to incoming units. Having concrete case studies and examples will help empower the leaders and Soldiers to better understand the area of operations.

## Chapter 2

# Cultural Perception and Mindset

Article #5: “Live with him [the counterpart], that at meal times and at audiences you may be naturally with him in his tent. Formal visits to give advice are not as good as the constant dropping of ideas in casual talk.” T.E. Lawrence

## PERCEPTION

2-1. People view their surroundings through the lens of their culture. Counterinsurgents should be mindful of this tendency when planning and executing counterinsurgency and evaluating the desired physical and psychological end state. A Soldier's perception of a community or group may be distorted by preconceived ideas, past experiences, or secondhand accounts. For counterinsurgents to see what is right and wrong with a situation (which is the essence of situational awareness), it is important they see through a lens as clear of distortions as possible.

## VALUES VERSUS INTERESTS

2-2. Counterinsurgents should distinguish between an insurgent group's values and its interests. Values and interests are the difference in what the group wants versus who the group is. Counterinsurgents must look at situations from an insurgent group's perspective to determine if that group's positions are interest or values based. If counterinsurgents fail to make this determination, they will have difficulty predicting the insurgent group's actions. Counterinsurgent's understanding the difference between an interest and a value is critical for everything from building relationships to building roads within local communities. Interests change as needs change and as opportunities present themselves. Values, on the other hand, remain stable over time.

### VALUES

2-3. Value is what people or groups share in their identity and those things or conditions they consider important. Values are principles or concepts that are important and are reflected in decisions and actions. People's values define who they are, what they believe, what they may be willing to give their life for, and what defines their sense of honor and respect. Values are acquired over time and are slow and difficult to change. Values are identity-based and define an individual or group. Values are concepts and ideas accepted and perceived as true. Values can be core, intermediate, or peripheral.

2-4. Core values are those values that are part of a person's essential identity. Core values are not easily changed. Examples of values may include belief in a religion, the value of democratic government, the importance of individual and collective honor, and the role of the family. Core values can vary from society to society. Core values are often unstated, taken for granted, resistant to change, and not consciously considered. Attempts to change the core values of a culture may result in significant unintended second-and third-order consequences.

2-5. Intermediate values are assumptions and expectations about the world and a person's identity. Intermediate values have a direct relationship with one's core values. These represent a set of rules that a person follows. Intermediate values can change over time and that change is sometimes influenced by leadership within a society or group.

2-6. The importance of a religious value system in the lives of individuals and cultures cannot be ignored. Religion dictates community rituals, funeral practices, rules of conduct, and modes of worship. Religion answers the fundamental questions which pervade human life:

- Who am I?
- Where have I come from and where am I going?
- Why is there evil?
- What is there after this life?

2-7. From intermediate values flow peripheral values. These values are open to debate, consciously considered, and are the values easiest to change. Peripheral values within a society are often debated. However, the intermediate values or core values are rarely challenged in that debate. For example, a society may debate the punishment for a murder and that debate can range from the death penalty to prison time with the hope of rehabilitation and return to society. However, the core value, that society has an obligation to seek justice and protect its members from murder, is not often challenged in that debate.

2-8. The totality of the identities, values, attitudes, and perceptions that an individual holds—and the ranking of their importance—is that person's value system. Religions and ideologies fall into this category. As a value system, a religion may include such things as a concept of God, a view of the afterlife, ideas about the sacred and the profane, funeral practices, rules of conduct, and modes of worship.

2-9. A value system acts as a filter for new information and serves as the lens through which people perceive the world. What members of a particular group believe to be rational, normal, or true may appear to outsiders to be strange, irrational, or illogical. Counterinsurgents should understand the value systems of various groups in an area of operations so they can effectively influence the population.

2-10. Counterinsurgent staffs analyze the value systems of the population, insurgents, and other groups in the area of operations carefully during mission analysis. A society's value system is fundamental to how an insurgency uses a core grievance to mobilize a population. Moreover, an insurgent group's value system influences its actions and its relationship with society. Differences between the insurgents' and population's value systems provide opportunities for counterinsurgents to separate the insurgents from the population.

## INTERESTS

2-11. Interests define what people and groups want. Interests may include a desire, benefit, incentive or advantage, sometimes a perceived right or claim. Interests may be flexible and can change. They may be tangible such as money or intangible such as prestige or power. Interests are linked to specific situations and identify what people and groups want in these situations.

2-12. The interests of a group flow from its value system. Interests refer to what a group or society wishes to attain or protect. The perception of these interests changes with time and events. For example, after the September 11th attacks, the U.S. wished to attain a greater degree of security and saw terrorist groups as greater threats. This event changed how the U.S. viewed its security interests at home and abroad.

2-13. Interests can include physical security, basic necessities, economic well-being, political participation, and social identity. During times of instability, when the government cannot function, the groups and organizations that people belong to meet some or all of their interests. Understanding a group's interests allows commanders to identify opportunities to meet or address those interests. A group's interests may be used as a core grievance by an insurgent, if that group thinks that the insurgent group is more likely to meet their grievance versus the host government.

2-14. Values and interests affect attitudes, which are affinities for and aversions to groups, persons, and objects. Attitudes affect perception, which is the process by which an individual selects, evaluates, and organizes information from the external environment. Commanders should consider groups' attitudes and perceptions regarding the following:

- Other groups.
- Outsiders (regional neighbors and the United Nations).
- Host-nation government.
- The U.S (military policies).
- Globalization.

2-15. Counterinsurgents should learn the value systems of the local population in the area of operations. When counterinsurgents attempt to determine what the local population wants or what their grievances are

without understanding their values, they risk addressing the causes of instability based on the values of the counterinsurgents. When counterinsurgents do this, regardless of their intentions, the result can be an alienated population, cultural missteps during execution, wasted resources, viable targets for insurgents, and loss of credibility.

## BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP

2-16. Each culture has its own rules regarding who a person may speak to, how and when the person may speak, and what topics the person may speak about. Many cultures rely heavily on nonverbal signals to communicate. In such cultures, posture, expression, and actions often convey more than spoken or written words.

2-17. Language is the ultimate communications barrier. The successful counterinsurgent should study, at a minimum, common phrases in the host-nation's language. Additionally, U.S. personnel should recognize that there are topics of conversation that should be avoided whenever possible (for example, religion, politics, ideology, and personal questions).

2-18. Counterinsurgents' cultural and geo-political knowledge, understanding, acceptance and respect are critical to their success across the range of military operations. Cultural variety requires counterinsurgents' awareness, patience, understanding, tolerance, respect, and adaptability. People develop their worldviews through their own socio-economic and cultural development. People's worldviews influence their attitudes, beliefs, characters, and behaviors. Soldiers often view the culture of other peoples and nations from the perspective of the Army and its values, customs, traditions, laws, technology, equipment, doctrine, tactics, and command authorities. Training, education, and socialization may mitigate the tendency of Soldiers to view other cultures in a negative light (ethnocentrism) and develop cultural awareness, understanding, and tolerance. Respect for the individual, human rights, and humanitarian concerns are the basis for the Geneva Convention and the Law of Armed Conflict. Soldiers, even in the most trying of circumstances, are bound by the Army Ethic to treat others with dignity and respect. Developing such an understanding is part of developing character. Army professionals demonstrate their character by consistently making right decisions and taking right actions, while upholding the Army Ethic. By demonstrating proper ethical behaviors, counterinsurgents demonstrate American values and acts as a role model for foreign counterparts.

2-19. Counterinsurgent forces must stress to the local population that they do not intend to undermine or change the local religion or traditions. However, counterinsurgents have to strive to reduce dysfunctional social practices that affect the counterinsurgent force's ability to conduct operations, because dysfunctional social practices affect their legitimacy in the perceptions of the local population. U.S. trainers and advisors must have the strength of character to stop unethical conduct or to report it to the appropriate chain of command.

2-20. Commanders, advisors, and trainers must realize that multinational partners may organize differently, think differently about how command functions, receive authority differently, and operate under different laws. Multinational partners may not share the same commitments, concepts of professionalism, or ethics as U.S. forces, and therefore they may behave differently. Counterinsurgents require cultural awareness and sensitivity to nuance and difference when working with multinational and host-nation forces.

2-21. Differences in cultural values may at times place U.S. forces in uncomfortable predicaments that challenge American values and Soldiers' moral beliefs. In moral dilemmas, Soldiers must use their best professional judgment and decide what actions to take. However, whatever decision a counterinsurgent makes must adhere to the principles of the Army Ethic and law of land warfare.

2-22. U.S. personnel should recognize they are a product of their own culture. They should learn as much as possible about the culture of the population with whom they need to communicate. When communicating with people across cultures, U.S. personnel should avoid ethnocentrism, or the tendency of individuals to judge all other groups according to their own group's standards, behaviors, and customs. Such notions lead an individual to see other groups as inferior by comparison. A key method to increase cultural perspective is for counterinsurgents to study their own culture in the same manner as they study another culture. By understanding how one's own culture affects perceptions, opinions, and attitudes, counterinsurgents can remove their own cultural lens and see another culture clearly.

2-23. Each culture has its own way of accomplishing required daily tasks. U.S. personnel should understand that each particular society may approach things differently; it does not mean that they are inefficient or less intelligent than other cultures. Being different should not be seen as negative. Respect for counterparts should be maintained at all times.

2-24. U.S. personnel should be flexible and ready to adapt and adjust their behavior; however, they should be careful not to overdo their adjustment. Individuals who are overly flexible are often perceived as being insincere. The successful counterinsurgent should strive to act in a way that is appropriate to the target culture. Above all, U.S. personnel should be themselves and show sincerity.

2-25. U.S. personnel should develop a tolerance for deviations from accepted norms. Events or activities that may seem extraordinary to newcomers may be common practice in the host-nation culture. U.S. personnel should be aware that members of the foreign culture may be astounded by that which is commonplace in the U.S. Counterinsurgents should carefully observe seemingly peculiar behavior before making judgments about it.

### DEVELOPING AND BUILDING TRUST

2-26. Counterinsurgent leaders, Soldiers, and civilians continuously build and reinforce trust with host nation or allied counterparts to ensure a counterinsurgency is successful. Developing mutual trust must be a planned, persistent and continuous activity. This activity is more of an art than a science. Rank and a position of authority, as a representative of the U.S. Government and the most powerful military force on earth, may open doors with allies or host-nation security forces and provide instant credibility. However, a foreign national counterpart may have expectations and preconceived notions about an American Soldier, whether that is a stereotype from Hollywood films, books and social media, or prior personal or familial experience with other American or foreign military forces.

2-27. Counterinsurgents must establish mutual trust. Counterinsurgents must lead by personal influence, often without any legal authority over their counterparts. Army professionals establish and continually build trust by consistently demonstrating competence, character, and commitment. Soldiers are expected to positively represent the U.S. and its Army. Counterinsurgents must be experts in the performance of their duties and the knowledge and skills they are attempting to impart on their counterparts. Counterinsurgents must also uphold the Army Ethic.

2-28. Counterinsurgents require integrity and honesty. Counterinsurgents do not make promises without the resources or authority to fulfill them. In almost all cultures, to honestly admit that one does not know the answer or does not possess the capabilities being requested is a better solution than to lie one's counterpart because it erodes or destroys trust. To be a trusted Army professional, Soldiers must be exemplary role models in all that they do. Trust is fragile and easily broken. Once it is lost, it is very difficult to regain. Counterinsurgents gain trust with their mannerisms; their willingness to listen, learn, and show respect and genuine concern for the welfare of their counterparts and their families; and their commitment to the broader U.S. mission of improving the situation in the host nation. Counterinsurgents should follow the basic tenets of operating in a foreign environment by honoring the dignity and worth of all humans and their basic human rights, as demonstrated by their actions.

2-29. Counterinsurgents can only establish trust through personal contact, interpersonal communications, and demonstrated actions. Electronic or other means of communications are minimally effective at developing trust. Personal contact through face-to-face, two-way communications is the most effective at developing the credibility, rapport, and trust that are essential to success. Personal contact bridges the gaps of cultural and inter-organizational barriers. Inter-organizational barriers often exist and the prejudices that arise from them can be exacerbated by misunderstanding and ignorance. Counterinsurgents should employ interpersonal skills and deal directly and closely with individual members of other organizations. This type of contact can effectively reinforce commonality and diminish the impact of disparity. These personal relationships are the key to effective inter-organizational relationships.

## FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATIONS ACROSS CULTURES

2-30. There are five key aspects that greatly impact communications across cultures. These factors are the—

- Level of formality.
- Level of directness and explicitness.
- Perception of time.
- Perception of the individual versus the group.
- Show of emotion.

## LEVEL OF FORMALITY

2-31. Levels of formality vary greatly from culture to culture. Most Asian cultures have a high level of formality. In contrast, the North American culture; specifically, Canada and the U.S., places very little emphasis on formality. U.S. personnel should recognize the importance placed on formality by host-nation and multinational partners and adjust their behavior accordingly.

2-32. For example, to most Germans, chewing gum when receiving a briefing may indicate that the individual is not paying attention. This translates into a lack of respect for the speaker and may even be construed as offensive. Conversely, Americans may be quite casual. Chewing gum during a presentation may not indicate a lack of attention. In certain settings, it may not even be considered a lack of manners.

2-33. To be successful, U.S. personnel should be aware of such cultural inconsistencies. A simple action that is completely acceptable in one culture may be considered distasteful in another. Counterinsurgents should research issues of formality regarding host-nation and multinational partners.

## LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS AND EXPLICTNESS

2-34. Certain cultures are very direct and explicit in their communications, while other cultures are indirect and vague when expressing themselves. Most people from Asian and Middle Eastern cultures rely on shared experience, nonverbal cues, and the context in which communications takes place. Consequently, they often seem indirect and vague in their verbal communications. In countries such as the U.S., United Kingdom, and Germany, people tend to rely heavily on the spoken word for communications. As a result, verbal interactions are very direct, precise, and explicit. Reliance on context in these cultures is low, as is reliance on nonverbal cues. However, to outsiders, this style of communication may be perceived as too direct and overly talkative.

2-35. The indirectness that characterizes communications in some cultures often is a strategy designed to prevent a person from losing face. It may be viewed as consideration for another person's sense of dignity. In cultures that are direct and explicit in their communications, however, this indirectness may be perceived as dishonesty or insincerity, suggesting that the speaker may have something to hide.

2-36. When communicating with people from a culture that has an indirect communication style, counterinsurgents must exercise extra caution, both in what is said and how it is said. Being overly direct may result in a loss of rapport or cause an offense. Counterinsurgents should give careful attention to nonverbal cues, shared experience, and the circumstances (for example, the scene and setting) in which the communications takes place. The true meanings of messages may actually reside more in these nonverbal cues than in the words uttered. On the other hand, when communicating with people from a more direct culture, typical American candor is more appropriate.

2-37. When dealing with more direct cultures, ill-prepared U.S. personnel may become offended when ideas or opinions are attacked with an unaccustomed degree of directness. To be successful, U.S. personnel should bear in mind that some cultures employ such directness as a technique to achieve clarity. U.S. personnel should be objective in listening to what their counterparts have to say and remember that attacks on ideas are not intended to be personal or deliberately embarrassing. Finally, because direct cultures place little reliance on context, U.S. personnel should pay particular attention to the spoken word.

## PERCEPTION OF TIME

2-38. Cultures may differ greatly in their perception of time. Researchers have made a useful distinction between monochromic-time and polychromic-time cultures. In monochromic-time cultures (which include most Western countries), members place a great emphasis on schedules, precise reckoning of time, and

promptness. In such cultures, the schedule takes precedence over the interpersonal relation. Furthermore, because of this urgency to maintain schedules, members of such cultures tend to get to the point quickly. This directness may be viewed as rude or brash in polychromic-time cultures.

2-39. In polychromic-time cultures, time is viewed as fluid. Members of polychromic-time societies do not observe strict schedules; agendas are subordinate to interpersonal relations. Most African and Asian countries, as well as a number of Latin American and Middle Eastern countries, are considered polychromic-time cultures.

2-40. By knowing how the concept of time is embraced within an area of operations, U.S. personnel can better adapt to a new cultural environment. Therefore, recognizing the U.S. is a monochromic-time culture, Americans should learn to be patient with polychromic-time cultures for whom punctuality is at best unimportant and at worst a negative trait.

## PERCEPTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL VERSUS THE GROUP

2-41. Cultures may be individualistic or collective in their orientation. An individualist culture as one in which the ties between individuals are loose and where people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families. In a collectivist culture, people are raised from birth into strong, cohesive groups. These groups offer a lifetime of protection in exchange for unquestionable loyalty.

2-42. In individualist cultures, the individual takes center stage. Independence is highly valued. Individuals earn credit or blame for the success or failure of their endeavors.

2-43. In collectivist cultures, an individual is regarded as a part of the group. Interdependence prevails among individuals in the same group. Credit or blame for success or failure belongs to the entire group. Individuals do not seek recognition and often are uncomfortable if it is offered.

## SHOW OF EMOTION

2-44. Each culture has its own system of expressing emotion. Some cultures tend to be very expressive with their emotions and show their feelings plainly by laughing, grimacing, or scowling. Other cultures tend to be more repressive. Rather than showing their feelings openly, members of these cultures keep their emotions controlled and subdued.

2-45. When people from these two cultures interact, misunderstandings are common. Those from the more expressive culture may view people from the repressive culture as cold or unfeeling. Similarly, those from the more repressive culture may view their more expressive colleagues as immature and eccentric. U.S. personnel should avoid snap judgments. To communicate effectively, counterinsurgents should be able to display the appropriate level of emotion.

## Chapter 3

# Cross-Cultural Communications and Engagement

Article #2: “Get to know their families, clans and tribes, friends and enemies, wells, hills and roads. Do all this by listening and by indirect inquiry. Do not ask questions. Get to speak their dialect of Arabic, not yours.” T.E. Lawrence

## CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

3-1. Communications is the transfer of messages from one person to the next. These messages may be passed along verbally, in writing, or by signals. In essence, the sender encodes a message and the receiver decodes it. The type and style of encoding used is based upon the sender's history, beliefs, values, prejudices, attitudes, and preferences.

3-2. The receiver decodes messages based upon lifestyle, group membership and rank, worldview, status, language, and social practice. Communications is a two-way process in which the encoding and decoding methods can affect both sending and receiving.

3-3. Effective communications occurs when the message is perceived and responded to in the manner that the sender intended. Ineffective communications primarily occurs from poorly chosen words, flawed timing, confusing mixtures of verbal and nonverbal signals, poor listening skills, and communications noise. Communications noise describes the influences that detract from effective communications.

## CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS CAPABAILITIES

3-4. Cross-cultural communications capabilities can be described in three levels that support development of cultural expertise. At the lowest level is awareness, followed by knowledge. The highest level is reached when these two are combined with well-trained and refined skills of understanding. As advisors or trainers progress through all three levels, they must possess and demonstrate respect, tolerance, adaptability and patience. These four personal qualities of professional character are required in gaining trust, regardless of the operational environment.

### AWARENESS

3-5. Awareness is the basic level of cross-cultural capability. Awareness of cultural differences and their impact is the first prerequisite for successful work with a host-nation counterpart. Simply being sensitive to the fact that differences exist and carefully observing actions and reactions can help counterinsurgents in adjusting behavior and modifying actions to achieve greater influence with their counterparts. Awareness is not region specific, and it can be instilled in counterinsurgents with relatively little training.

### KNOWLEDGE

3-6. Knowledge of the details and nuances of a specific target culture is the next level of cross-cultural capability. This second level is attained through a combination of academic study and immersion. Such knowledge is inherently area-specific and does not transfer from one target area (or culture) to another. Developing the in-depth area or regional knowledge necessary for effective cross-cultural communications requires an extensive and time-consuming training regimen and should be supported by appropriate personnel assignment policies.

## SKILLS

3-7. Skills fundamental to effective cross-cultural communications, when combined with regional awareness and knowledge, form the highest level of cross-cultural capability. Although some individuals show greater natural talent for these skills than others, all Soldiers require continual training in each to achieve and retain their full potential as U.S. advisors to foreign counterparts. These skills are—

- Professional competence and job skills.
- Language skills.
- Nonverbal and illiterate communications skills.
- Negotiation skills.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Observation skills.
- Problem solving skills.
- Leadership skills.
- Instructional techniques.
- Fitness skills.
- Region-specific skills.

## TRUSTWORTHY ARMY PROFESSIONAL

3-8. Members of the Army Profession must possess and consistently demonstrate their character, competence and commitment to become trusted advisors. An individual's knowledge, skills, character, and adherence to the Army Ethic should gain the trust of host-nation counterparts and the indigenous population. Given the nature of the counterinsurgency missions, all three professional attributes are critical to personal credibility and eventually, trust. Without a high degree of trust, a counterinsurgent's advice is likely to be disregarded. Demonstrated professional competence in one area leads to a presumption of competence in other areas, including some that may not be directly related to each other. Additionally, operational experience—particularly successful combat experience—is extremely useful, as this is universally considered a hallmark of professional military competence. As with all experience, however, counterinsurgents should be careful not to overstate the applicability of their particular experience-foreign counterparts may consider this bragging. Soldiers, as the Army's "quiet professionals," should take a balanced approach to conveying experience to host-nation counterparts. Unit training programs should stress the following subjects and help in relating them to the Soldier's target region and culture:

- The Army Ethic and the ethical application of lethal force.
- Technical and tactical expertise.
- A thorough knowledge of command and staff processes.
- The theory of regular and irregular warfare.
- Basic Soldier skills (for example, marksmanship and map reading).
- Personal fitness and human dimension training.

## LANGUAGE

3-9. Language is fundamental to cross-cultural communications. The greater the proficiency in the local language, the more easily, quickly, completely, and accurately Soldiers can communicate with the local population. Complete, timely, and accurate communications are fundamental to mission success. Reaching a level of language proficiency that permits counterinsurgents to understand nuances and inferred or implied messages vastly enhances communications capabilities. Proficiency in the use of an interpreter can be substituted for language ability; however, no matter how skillfully an interpreter is employed, the use of an interpreter diminishes the capability to effectively and confidently communicate. Acquiring both language proficiency and the skills to properly use interpreters requires significant training.

3-10. The perceived commonality of language may be misleading. In many situations, what individuals think they said is not what they actually said. Likewise, an individual may hear something that was not said or was not intended to be said. Each organization has its own specific jargon and has its own interpretation

of key words and phrases. Counterinsurgents should learn these variances and use terms and phrases appropriately. Body language is often just as important as terms and phrases. What one organization perceives as poise may be interpreted by another as carelessness. Formalities accepted in one organization as normal courtesies might be viewed by other organizations as overly rigid and limiting. Counterinsurgents should not automatically adopt another organization's norms. However, they should remain cognizant of the impact those norms have upon the members' interpretations of words and actions.

## NONVERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

3-11. Counterinsurgents can learn to deliberately use nonverbal communications (that is, gestures, posture, and positioning). The use of nonverbal communications, together with culture-specific knowledge, enhances verbal communications and understanding. Incorrect or improper use of gestures or other nonverbal signals can inhibit communications, destroy relationships, and even result in mission failure. Although simple awareness of the impact of nonverbal communications provides some level of preparation to U.S. personnel, detailed regional and cultural training in their use is essential. Repetitive practical exercises should be integral to any training program, because most nonverbal communications occurs spontaneously and subconsciously.

## NEGOTIATION

3-12. Negotiation is the art of influence. It is an essential skill that takes experience, practice, and adaptability to develop. Counterinsurgents should develop effective negotiation skills. Counterinsurgents must remember that they are not the decision makers for the government or force being advised or trained. Therefore, counterinsurgents should “suggest” rather than direct actions to persuade counterparts to make certain decisions and take desired actions. Counterinsurgents must become effective advisors as well as effective negotiators. U.S. personnel should negotiate with an awareness of whether they are negotiating from a position of relative weakness or strength to persuade others to take desired actions.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

3-13. Interpersonal skills are used to establish, develop, and sustain trust, cordial and mutually respectful relationships, and open lines of communications between two or more people. Such techniques are employed in face-to-face settings, whether one-on-one or in small groups, as well as in non-verbal communications methods, such as letters, e-mail, and other correspondence. They include tact, tolerance of individual idiosyncrasies or cultural norms, conversational skills, personal hygiene, and courtesy. Training in interpersonal skills often requires formal instruction, but this instruction can be integrated into training designed to accomplish other objectives.

## OBSERVATION

3-14. U.S. personnel depend on their ability to observe and interpret their environment, including the actions and reactions of those around them. Counterinsurgents note the details of the setting and activities framing an exchange with someone, as well as, the nuances of the response. Noting these details can provide a degree of understanding that leads to mission success. Recollection of such details and nuances facilitates post-encounter analysis to capture what occurred and to enhance future exchanges. Other cross cultural skills (such as negotiation) also rely heavily on the ability to observe accurately and comprehensively. Like interpersonal skills, training in the techniques of effective observation and recollection can be integrated into other training.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

3-15. U.S. personnel should develop and employ problem-solving skills. Templates or solutions developed in advance are seldom adequate in dynamic and unpredictable circumstances. Counterinsurgents should adapt and articulate doctrinally accepted U.S. tactics, techniques, and procedures in culturally acceptable and supportable terms. Counterinsurgents can significantly improve problem-solving skills and confidence in problem-solving abilities through training.

### LEADERSHIP

3-16. Basic leadership skills, when properly adapted to the counterpart's culture, are very effective. However, counterinsurgents should emphasize peer leadership techniques. Leadership techniques based on positional authority or other forms of coercion are of limited use to counterinsurgents and generally have long term negative effects. Counterinsurgents should be trained to employ leadership techniques appropriate to their role and to specific regions and cultures.

### INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

3-17. Counterinsurgents should be competent in both formal and informal methods of instruction. Counterinsurgents carefully analyze and adapt their methods based on cultural norms and practices. An emphasis on informal methods of instruction-particularly those that are (or appear to be) cooperative-are most effective in cross-cultural communications.

### Fitness

3-18. Physical skills and the resulting personal fitness can be critical to personal and professional credibility when dealing with military counterparts. Fatigue reduces overall capability, diminishes perceptiveness, impairs thought processes, and impedes cross-cultural communications. Physical training programs are readily adaptable to the requirements of a focused culture and region.

### Region-Specific Skills

3-19. As knowledge of a given culture is developed, certain activities or capabilities may emerge as critical to cross-cultural communications and effective counterpart relations. For example, some level of proficiency in a popular local sport may help establish interpersonal relationships that permit more effective communications and greater influence. Soccer is an example of a widely played sport. More localized examples include horseback or camel riding, swimming, trapping, or even singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. Small investments in skills seemingly unrelated to military mission requirements can provide disproportionately high returns in influence.

## IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

3-20. Counterinsurgents in past operations have stressed the value of cultural knowledge. They have provided tips on developing cultural knowledge and cultural understanding in an area of operations. Counterinsurgents have to learn about the country's history, customs, and way of life. They should learn the things that make the country tick and learn how to work with them. Counterinsurgents cannot go into an area of operations and expect the local population to do things their way. If counterinsurgents show understanding, respect, and fair treatment, the local population should be open to negotiation. Counterinsurgents should gain the trust of the local population. Counterinsurgents should get a feel for the native sensibilities to be functionally effective in a community. They should endeavor to understand the nuances. Counterinsurgents do not have to be sympathetic in terms of being politically inclined to the views of the local population, but counterinsurgents should understand why they are fighting. In many regions, honor and “face” mean everything. The volume and tone of a counterinsurgent's voice are important. Counterinsurgents can lose “face” quickly if they lose their patience with an interpreter or become overly emotional about anything. Counterinsurgents should remain calm and gentle and use a low tone while speaking.

3-21. Culture determines a person's perception of the world. The manner in which each culture views its surroundings may differ greatly from place to place. Areas that tend to have the greatest variation of cultural viewpoints include:

- Family.
- Gender roles.
- Individualism (versus group emphasis).
- Age.
- Friends.

- Status.
- Hygiene.
- Personal space.
- Time.
- Education.
- Gestures.

3-22. In most cultures, ideology leads individuals to see an ideal version of their own culture rather than the one that really exists. For example, there is a very large gap between the American culture perceived by U.S. residents and the perception held by the rest of the world. Likewise, as foreigners, counterinsurgents may view a host-nation culture through the prism of their own idealized culture. This creates a large gap between the culture the counterinsurgents sees and a host nation's real culture.

# PROGRAM OF CULTURAL IMMERSION

3-23. A cultural immersion program should develop culturally astute counterinsurgents with the knowledge, skills, and experience to effectively operate, gain the trust of the local people, and achieve mission success. The general theme of cultural immersion should be to build relationships and gain the trust of the local people by demonstrating an understanding and sensitivity towards their culture.

3-24. A deeper awareness of the cultural aspects of the area of operations, coupled with the cultural knowledge of the area of operations can significantly enhance the effectiveness of counterinsurgents. The best approach is an extensive cultural study program that combines language training and cultural education seminars through the use of native or credible speakers with personal experience in the target or neighboring country. A cultural study program should also provide subsequent opportunities for counterinsurgents to immerse themselves in the cultural environment, living and interacting with the members of the local population for four to eight weeks to support security cooperation-related operations or activities. A counterinsurgent's immersion within the area of operations facilitates capturing a more complete and accurate picture of the area of operation's cultural nuances. Furthermore, the pre-mission training process should be dynamic and move beyond the standard lecture-with-handout format. For example, small groups or a discussion panels are most effective. Cultural behavior and cultural familiarization handbooks can be extremely useful. However, because such handbooks vary greatly in accuracy and quality, subject matter experts should be consulted to determine which handbooks to incorporate into a cultural study program. Cultural study programs of instruction that are reinforced with an opportunity for a profound intercultural experience through immersion also seek to ensure counterinsurgents understand—

- Comparisons of cultural values and social structures (U.S. compared to those of the area of operations).
- Local customs and traditions (for example, greetings and actions to avoid).
- Geopolitical history (pre-colonial to contemporary, and the orientation of each faction or party).
- The role of religion in daily life.
- How to gain acceptance and trust.
- How to maintain a neutral perspective (for example, avoid stereotyping and being aware of bias).
- How to gain cooperation during investigations and information-gathering sessions.
- How to avoid embarrassing or potentially dangerous situations.

3-25. In an effort to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the target cultural environment, leveraging the use of guest speakers native to the country of interest (for example, private or nongovernmental staff members with country experience, foreign students, and recent immigrants) or others who have worked in or studied the mission area (for example, foreign area officers, diplomats, and scholars) are paramount to success. Many civilian U.S. agencies, including the U.S. Agency for International Development, have developed intercultural effectiveness programs designed for their personnel working overseas. Often these programs can be revised and tailored for military and paramilitary groups. If available, these programs are an excellent resource for pre-deployment preparation.

***Note***: It is possible for counterinsurgents to try so hard to absorb every detail about a new culture or country that they will actually suffer from effects similar to culture shock, even though they have not yet left their home station. Cultural training should be thorough, but not overwhelming.

## CULTURAL BODY LANGUAGE

3-26. Body language and gestures are products of custom, and they can be just as important to communications as spoken or written language. The improper use of a gesture-even as simple as a thumbs-up gesture or a two-finger peace sign-can upset a carefully nurtured relationship.

3-27. The most basic survival gesture—the smile—is a visual signal that is universally understood. However, even though the smile is understood in every culture, some fine distinctions do exist between cultures. Russians, for example, very rarely smile on the street. The French believe Americans smile too much. The Japanese seldom smile during (what they consider to be) formal circumstances, such as a photograph for a driver's license or Christmas card. Malaysians and Indonesians tend to smile—even giggle—when they feel nervous or embarrassed.

3-28. The common symbol for "OK," made by touching the tips of thumb and index finger, is one of the best-known gestures in the U.S. However, in other cultures, the same gesture may mean something entirely different. For example—

- In the south of France, this gesture is used to indicate zero or something that is worthless. An individual who uses the symbol to indicate OK may negate a negotiated arrangement or offend a counterpart by indicating that the deal (or the individual) is worthless.
- In Japan, this gesture is used to indicate a coin or money. An individual who uses the symbol to indicate OK may offend the counterpart by appearing to ask for a bribe.
- In Brazil, Germany, and Russia, this gesture is used to indicate intimate body parts. A counterinsurgent carelessly using this gesture may appear to be suggesting something unintended.

3-29. Counterinsurgents should pay particular attention to seemingly minor differences. For example, Americans tend to beckon a waiter by raising a single finger, but that type of pointing gesture is frowned upon in Japan, where pointing is done with the thumb of a closed fist. In most of Europe, people beckon waiters by holding their hand in front of them (fingertips forward with the palm facing the floor) and making a scratching motion with the fingers. Another common beckoning gesture in the U.S. is made by holding the index finger straight up (facing inward) and curling it up and down. In Australia, Indonesia, and Mexico, this gesture is reserved for animals and prostitutes.

3-30. Counterinsurgents should thoroughly study the use of body language in the area of operations before deployment. Once deployed, counterinsurgents should continue to study the body language used by the host-nation population. The behavior of members of the population in the surrounding area should also be considered (for example, how the people call a waiter or how they wave goodbye). Counterinsurgents should observe posture, body language, and common gestures, such as people tapping the sides of their noses, or flipping the lobes of their ears.

## CULTURAL NONVERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

3-31. Nonverbal communications use facial expressions, gestures, physical contact, and body postures to convey meaning. Although there are many excellent works on the subject, virtually every publication discusses nonverbal communications from a particular cultural vantage point. Nonverbal communications and culture are inseparable. Understanding the culture from which nonverbal communications originate is necessary to understanding this type of communication.

## INTERPERSONAL DISTANCE

3-32. The space people maintain around their bodies reflects the desire to control who is allowed to get close and the circumstances in which closeness is considered acceptable. An individual who violates another individual's interpersonal space without consent is usually perceived as hostile or aggressive. The

perception of appropriate interpersonal distance varies between cultures and reflects the style and tone of the society at large. The guidelines provided here cannot be applied to every relationship or circumstance, even within a single cultural group. Few areas of nonverbal communications are more sensitive than interpersonal space. Fortunately, the appropriate distance is easy to respect once it is identified.

3-33. For counterinsurgents serving in an advisory role, interpersonal distance is particularly important when administering or receiving criticism. In such instances, individuals should be sure they do not stand too close to one another. Too small of an interpersonal gap can make one or both of the individuals feel threatened and defensive. People who feel defensive have trouble expressing themselves clearly. They are resistant to suggestion, correction, and criticism, and they may even become aggressive.

### *Touching*

3-34. Touching should be minimized when communicating across cultural lines. Although some cultures are more open to touching than others, even the most demonstrative groups have rules of propriety and etiquette. Physical contact made at the wrong time can risk serious misunderstandings.

3-35. In mainstream American culture, touching is generally discouraged. Native-born Americans tend to abandon touch at an early age and substitute words as the primary means of communications. Northern Europeans, such as the Germans, Scandinavians, and British, are similarly uncomfortable with touching from anyone other than intimate family members or friends. Touching is discouraged in most Asian cultures, particularly to the back, head, or shoulder. Additionally, small children are not to be touched by anyone outside the immediate family. While it is common for an American adult to playfully tousle the hair of a small child, such actions may be deemed extremely offensive in some Asian cultures. In the example of the small child's hair, a counterinsurgent's well-meant attempt to ease tension by tousling a child's hair to display a sense of humor and build trust would probably achieve the exact opposite.

3-36. There are rules for touching. Most Americans are careful in how they touch, because U.S. society is so aware of the potential for people to use negative touching to intimidate or threaten. Researchers classify Americans as “low touchers” in relation to the rest of the world. However, the use of touch in such a multicultural society varies. Some Americans never touch anyone outside their immediate family, even though they may prize such a person's friendship. Others touch often—usually on the shoulders and arms—but such contact is not designed to express any real meaning.

3-37. In the U.S., touching is used mainly when individuals meet or depart (for example, a handshake or a casual hug). Americans can simulate the feeling of touch (without ever touching) by allowing others to move in close when talking. Close friends may exchange hugs, pretend punches, or kisses, and may touch frequently when talking. For acquaintances and superiors, a simple handshake is all that is expected. Some people are considered “high touchers” and give friendly arm, back, and shoulder touches—even to new acquaintances. Some Americans show publicly what might be considered private expressions of affection in other cultures (for example, prolonged kisses or other overt displays of affection).

3-38. Handshakes exchanged in the U.S. tend to be more firm than other cultures. For instance, Chinese, Japanese, and most Africans use light handshakes. This does not indicate that the individual is unassertive; it is simply a cultural trait. Russians and most Europeans use firm handshakes. Similarly, this does not necessarily imply that the individual is assertive or tough.

### *Eye Contact*

3-39. Rules for appropriate eye contact vary among cultures; however, few people consciously recognize that such rules even exist. Still, individuals normally act according to their societal norms. Most individuals have unconsciously absorbed the rules of their culture.

3-40. Among the majority of North Americans, the accepted rule is for individuals to make intermittent eye contact with the people to whom they are speaking. If people hold eye contact for too long, they may be considered aggressive. If people hold eye contact too briefly, they may come across as disinterested. An individual who consistently fails to make eye contact may appear evasive or dishonest.

3-41. Counterinsurgents should be sensitive to cultural variations when making eye contact. In some African cultures, for example, it is considered impolite to make more than the briefest eye contact. To most Americans, such an exchange would imply that the other party was distracted and not paying attention.

### *Facial Expressions and Gestures*

3-42. It is not unusual for Americans to use facial expressions to convey doubt, surprise, distrust, anger, agreement, or rejection. Other cultures are less expressive with facial expressions. For example, a Japanese counterpart's face may be expressionless, but inside that counterpart may be furious. Similarly, a Japanese counterpart may enthusiastically agree with a recommendation, although that counterpart's outward expression might be interpreted as indifference.

3-43. The majority of Americans use wide hand gestures. In most European and Pacific Rim countries, hand gestures are kept to a minimum. In Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa it is common for people to use wide gestures to emphasize their points of view. Counterinsurgents should exercise caution in both the number and magnitude of their hand gestures.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS ON CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS

3-44. Researching a specific culture can be an endless activity. Counterinsurgents should not get bogged down in the minute details of a single cultural feature. Instead, they should strive to understand many aspects of a culture. If counterinsurgents demonstrate basic knowledge and are willing to listen and learn, they should be able to effectively exchange information.

3-45. Counterinsurgents should consult with individuals who lived in the host nation and know the local customs. A one-hour interview with a native may be more productive than a week of formal language and culture training.

3-46. Effective communications requires practice. Counterinsurgents should rehearse favorable body language and eliminate unfavorable gestures and postures. Body language can be as important as verbal messages. Body language should appear natural and not labored or uncomfortable.

3-47. Counterinsurgents should recognize that a negative stereotype my precede them. They should try to understand and discern this stereotype. Over time, they may be able to improve the local impression of counterinsurgents. Finally, counterinsurgents should be mentally prepared to experience the unknown.

## CULTURE SHOCK AND ADAPTATION

3-48. The term culture shock describes the anxiety people often experience in a completely new environment. This term expresses the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first two weeks of arriving in a new environment. The period of adjustment lasts approximately six months for most people.

3-49. Culture shock occurs because people's minds and bodies go through a period of psychological and physiological adjustment when they move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one. The cues received by all of the senses suddenly change. During the day, a person in a new environment is bombarded with unfamiliar sights, sounds, smells, tastes, languages, gestures, rules, requirements, interactions, demands, systems, and expectations.

3-50. At night—even during sleep—the brain continues to process unrecognizable sounds, the nose continues to detect unfamiliar odors, and the stomach continues to process unfamiliar foods. Even dreams seem to contain new and unfamiliar features and characters. Culture shock encompasses the cumulative effect of all of these stresses. Further psychological disorientation is brought about when a person's deeply held values are brought into question because of cultural differences. Counterinsurgents tend to grow particularly frustrated when they are expected to function with maximum proficiency in situations where the rules are not adequately explained.

3-51. Over time, individuals have no choice but to adapt to their environment. There are two problems associated with this acclimation. First, the spoken rules of a culture, such as favored foods, may not be

simple or pleasant to adopt. Second, the unspoken rules of a culture may be difficult to identify. Although the native members of a culture know all the rules, they may not be capable of adequately articulating those rules. Newcomers may need to be resourceful to extract the most basic information about why things are done in a certain way and at a certain time.

3-52. Foreign societies may also have culture-based expectations that are unknown to a newcomer. Such expectations frequently surface during the first few months in a new country. It is extremely stressful for counterinsurgents to know that there are multiple expectations at every turn and not know exactly what those expectations are or how to fulfill them. Psychologists agree this stress is a major contributor to culture shock.

3-53. Culture shock is not the result of a single event. Rather, the condition develops slowly from a series of minor events or conditions. Both the causes and the effects may be difficult to identify. Furthermore, because the human reactions are emotional, they are not easily controlled by rational management.

3-54. Some of the differences that counterinsurgents experience between their lives at their home station and their lives when deployed to a foreign location are obvious. These differences include language, climate, religion, food, educational system, and the absence of family and friends. Other differences may not be as obvious. These differences include how people make decisions, spend their leisure time, resolve conflicts, express their emotions, and use their hands, faces, and bodies to express meaning.

3-55. Being immersed in a society with extreme cultural differences tends to cause feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. The body and mind may react in unusual ways. Some persons may experience more pronounced physical symptoms of stress, such as chronic headaches or upset stomachs. Although uncomfortable, some degree of culture shock is a normal part of the adjustment process. Some common reactions include—

- Feeling irritable with (or even anger toward) one's own group or organization.
- Feeling isolated or alone.
- Tiring easily.
- Changing normal sleep patterns (either too much sleep or not enough).
- Suffering minor (but persistent) body pains, especially in the head, neck, back, and stomach.
- Experiencing feelings of hostility and contempt toward local people.
- Withdrawing from the local population (that is, spending excessive amounts of time alone reading or listening to music).

## STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

3-56. There are five distinct stages in the culture shock process. These stages are enthusiasm, withdrawal, reemergence, achievement, and reentry.

### Stage 1 - Enthusiasm

3-57. Stage 1 is best described as the incubation period. In this stage, the new arrival may feel self-confident and pleasantly challenged. He or she may be delighted by all of the new things encountered. This is the “honeymoon” period; everything is new and exciting. Stage 1 typically lasts about two weeks.

### Stage 2 - Withdrawal

3-58. In stage 2, a person begins to encounter difficulties and minor (but annoying) crises in daily life. It may be difficult to make oneself understood. The situation encountered may not be what was originally expected. Local nationals may prove more difficult to work with than once anticipated. In this stage, there may be feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, and even incompetence. These symptoms occur in proportion to how different the new culture is from the culture of origin. The transition between the old methods and the new is a difficult process that takes time to complete. During this transition, there can be strong feelings of dissatisfaction.

### Stage 3 - Reemergence

3-59. Stage 3 is characterized by gaining some understanding of the new culture. A renewed feeling of pleasure and sense of humor may be experienced. One may begin to feel a certain psychological balance. The new arrival may not feel as isolated and a feeling of direction emerges. The individual is more familiar with the environment and is better able to belong. This process initiates an evaluation of old ways versus new ways.

### Stage 4 - Achievement

3-60. In stage 4, a person realizes that the new culture has both good and bad things to offer. This stage is one of integration; the person is increasingly able to function in the new setting. A sense of accomplishment, a reduction of routine annoyances, and a more solid sense of belonging accompany this integration.

### Stage 5 - Reentry

3-61. Stage 5 is reentry shock. This occurs when the individual returns to the U.S. One may find that things are not as they once were (or how they are remembered). Changes that occurred in a person's absence, including changes involving family, friends, communities, and the individual, combine to present a distorted image of home that differs greatly from the one imagined or remembered.

## CULTURE SHOCK SYMPTOMS

3-62. The stages of culture shock may be present at different times in different people, and different people react differently to each stage. As a consequence, some stages may last longer and be more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the duration and effects of culture shock. For example, the state of behavioral health, the type of personality, previous experiences, socio-economic conditions, familiarity with the language, family and social support systems, and the level of education all contribute to an individual's reaction to culture shock.

3-63. Certain symptoms of culture shock are fairly common and less severe. Such typical symptoms include—

- Homesickness.
- Boredom.
- Lethargy.
- Withdrawal.
- Irritability.
- Hostility.
- Irrational anger.
- Gastrointestinal distress.
- Disruption of normal sleeping patterns.

3-64. Other symptoms of culture shock present a more serious threat to the individual's physical, psychological, and emotional health and may compromise the success of the mission. Symptoms of acute culture shock mirror those produced by other forms of stress, and include—

- Sadness or depression.
- Loneliness.
- Preoccupation with health.
- Allergy-like symptoms.
- Feelings of vulnerability.
- Anger, irritability, resentment, and an unwillingness to interact with others.
- Inability to identify with any culture other than that of the U.S.
- Loss of identity.
- Inability to solve simple problems.

- Loss of confidence.
- Feelings of inadequacy or insecurity.
- Obsessive behavior (for example, being overly concerned with cleanliness).
- Longing for family.
- Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited, or abused.

## FIGHTING CULTURE SHOCK

3-65. Although an individual may experience difficulties from culture shock, it is also an opportunity for learning and for acquiring new perspectives. Culture shock can make one develop a better understanding of oneself and stimulate personal creativity.

3-66. One of the most important tools to overcome the obstacles of a new environment is familiarity with the language. An ability to communicate in the new culture, even at the most basic level, pays enormous dividends in reducing the effect and shortening the period of adjustment. Other means of combating culture shock include—

- Having previous experience in the area. Familiarity is one of the greatest reducers of stress.
- Being patient. Adaptation to new situations takes time.
- Learning to be constructive. Counterinsurgents should strive to learn from unfavorable encounters and avoid repeating them.
- Not trying too hard. Counterinsurgents should give themselves a chance to adjust.
- Learning to include a regular form of physical activity to personal routines. Exercise helps to combat stress in a constructive manner.
- Practicing relaxation and meditation. These activities have proven to be very positive for people experiencing periods of stress.
- Maintaining contact with teammates. By paying attention to the organizational relationships, counterinsurgents can maintain a feeling of belonging and reduce feelings of loneliness and alienation.
- Maintaining contact with the new culture.
- Improving local language skills.
- Volunteering in community activities (if appropriate). Such activities allow counterinsurgents to practice the language and meet more people. This helps to reduce stress about language and allows counterinsurgents to feel useful.
- Accepting the new culture. Time spent criticizing the culture is time wasted. Counterinsurgents should focus on getting through the transition by thinking of (at least) one thing each day that is interesting or likeable about the new environment.
- Establishing simple goals and continuously evaluating progress.
- Finding ways to live with the things that are not entirely satisfactory.
- Maintaining confidence in self, in the organization, and in the mission.
- Looking for help with the stress when required.
- Recognizing that uncertainty and confusion are natural. It may be helpful for counterinsurgents to imagine how a local resident might react to living in the U.S.
- Observing how people in a new environment act in situations that are confusing. Counterinsurgents should try to understand what they believe and why they behave as they do. Counterinsurgents should avoid judging things as either right or wrong; they simply should be viewed as different.
- Remembering methods that have been successful in reducing stress in difficult situations in the past and applying those methods to present circumstances.
- Trying to see the humor in confusing or frustrating situations. Laughter is one of the greatest stress relievers.

- Accepting the difficult challenge of living and functioning in a new cultural setting. Counterinsurgents should believe that they can learn the skills required to make a satisfactory transition and should gradually try to apply some of these learned skills.
- Recognizing the advantages of having lived in two different cultures. Meeting people with different cultural backgrounds can enrich life. Counterinsurgents should attempt to share time with many different people and think of ways to help local residents learn how Americans believe and act.
- Acknowledging even slight progress in adjusting to the new culture. Many individuals have adjusted to difficult and alien environments. Counterinsurgents should recognize that they too will make a successful adjustment to the new culture.

## Chapter 4

# Cultural Understanding: A Three Level Approach

Article #23: "Their minds work just as ours do, but on different premises. There is nothing unreasonable, incomprehensible, or inscrutable in the Arab. Experience of them, and knowledge of their prejudices will enable you to foresee their attitude and possible course of action in nearly every case." T.E. Lawrence

## CULTURAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING METHODOLOGY

4-1. Cultural training and education begins with understanding the universal framework of societies and what shapes cultures. The focus of cultural understanding refers to local groups and communities, which combined make up the larger population framework. Understanding a society begins with cross-cultural competencies, communications, and rapport building skills. The foundations that link cultural understanding to situational understanding exist across many topics and help counterinsurgents develop the broader perspective and understanding of their surroundings. The cultural understanding process begins with cultural education, unit training, and deployments to enhance counterinsurgents' abilities to achieve situational understanding within a particular area of operations.

4-2. Effective pre-deployment cultural training, combined with cultural education in the professional military education system, enables Soldiers to achieve situational understanding quickly once in theater. One of the major components of situational understanding is knowing what looks or seems right and wrong with a situation or in a specific context. This means that counterinsurgents are aware when something is out of place (including physical, behavioral, and ideological changes) versus what is normal (meaning things are "in place," as they should be). Counterinsurgents use the three level approach to gain cultural understanding, and, ultimately, situational understanding through cultural education and training. (See figure 4-1.)

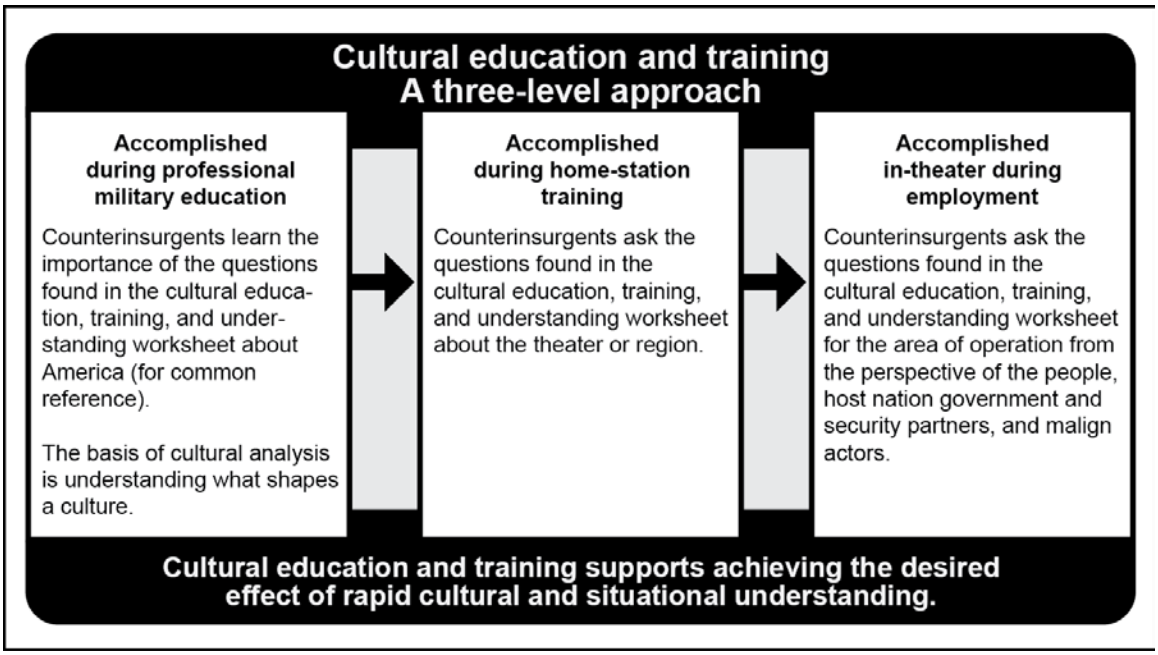



**Figure 4-1. The three level approach to cultural understanding**

### CULTURAL EDUCATION

4-3. Cultural education is the step that focuses on what defines a culture. The humanities and social sciences are the study of man, mankind, societies, and morals. The topics include history, sociology, anthropology, economics, geography, philosophy, and religion. Counterinsurgents need to know local history to achieve cultural and situational understanding. Counterinsurgents also need to know about sociology, anthropology, economics, geography, philosophy, and religion to enhance force protection and mission accomplishment. Cultural education is the foundation of cultural training, and it provides an understanding of culture as explained by the humanities and social sciences. Counterinsurgents require a foundation in the humanities and social sciences to enable situational understanding.

### CULTURAL TRAINING

4-4. Regional cultural training is designed to build on cultural education. Cultural training uses educational tools to help units and personnel apply cultural information about the theater of operations (a country or region). Counterinsurgents use a common framework for cultural training to ensure that the information presented is sufficient.

### SITUATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

4-5. Theater of operations-specific cultural pre-deployment training lays the foundation for eventually achieving specific situational understanding of an area of operations. Counterinsurgents are situationally aware when they know something is out of place, such as a vehicle parked in an unusual location, a change in foot traffic on a weekday afternoon, a change in the number of workers showing up during a harvest season, or even a mood or customer demographic change at a local market. The process described in this chapter is designed to rapidly achieve levels of awareness that would take far longer without a deliberate effort. This chapter uses a methodology that consists of a three step process of cultural education, cultural training, and awareness to achieve rapid cultural and situational understanding to "sense" that something is out of the norm.

4-6. Counterinsurgents can achieve situational training through focused training and immersion into a local culture. This means immersion into local communities through dismounted patrols, operating on smaller outposts within communities, and listening and working with local leaders. Immersion leads to understanding and dealing with the prerequisites of insurgency. This chapter outlines a recommended nested, progressive, and sequential methodology of cultural education and training to achieve cultural and situational understanding.

4-7. Prior to deployment, counterinsurgents, regardless of their rank or job, need to have a sound foundation in the humanities and social sciences. This foundation should include, but is not be limited to, understanding the local history and how it shapes a culture. Counterinsurgents should ask questions to understand what, why, and how the history of a nation, region, and eventually a community is important culturally. Questions that aid in developing situational understanding include—

- What were the major wars, massacres, and conflicts that shaped the culture?
- Who were some of the great leaders, heroes, or legends in the nation's history?
- Who were some of the villains (infamous people) in the nation's history?
- Who founded the country? Who brought it to its modern form?

## THE THREE STEPS TO CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

4-8. With an understanding of the cultural influence topics and the education, training, and understanding methodology, counterinsurgents can see problems from the perspective of the population. The cultural education, training, and understanding methodology provides specific questions that, when answered, foster cultural understanding and continuity for follow-on units. The methodology is divided into three parts with each part corresponding to a portion of a counterinsurgent's cultural development. They are cultural education, cultural training, and cultural understanding (specific to an area of operations) that also contributes to situational understanding. Figure 4-2 explains the system that links cultural education and training with cultural and situational understanding. (See figure 4-2 which is a diagram using the education,

training, and understanding methodology that links cultural education and training with cultural and situational understanding.)

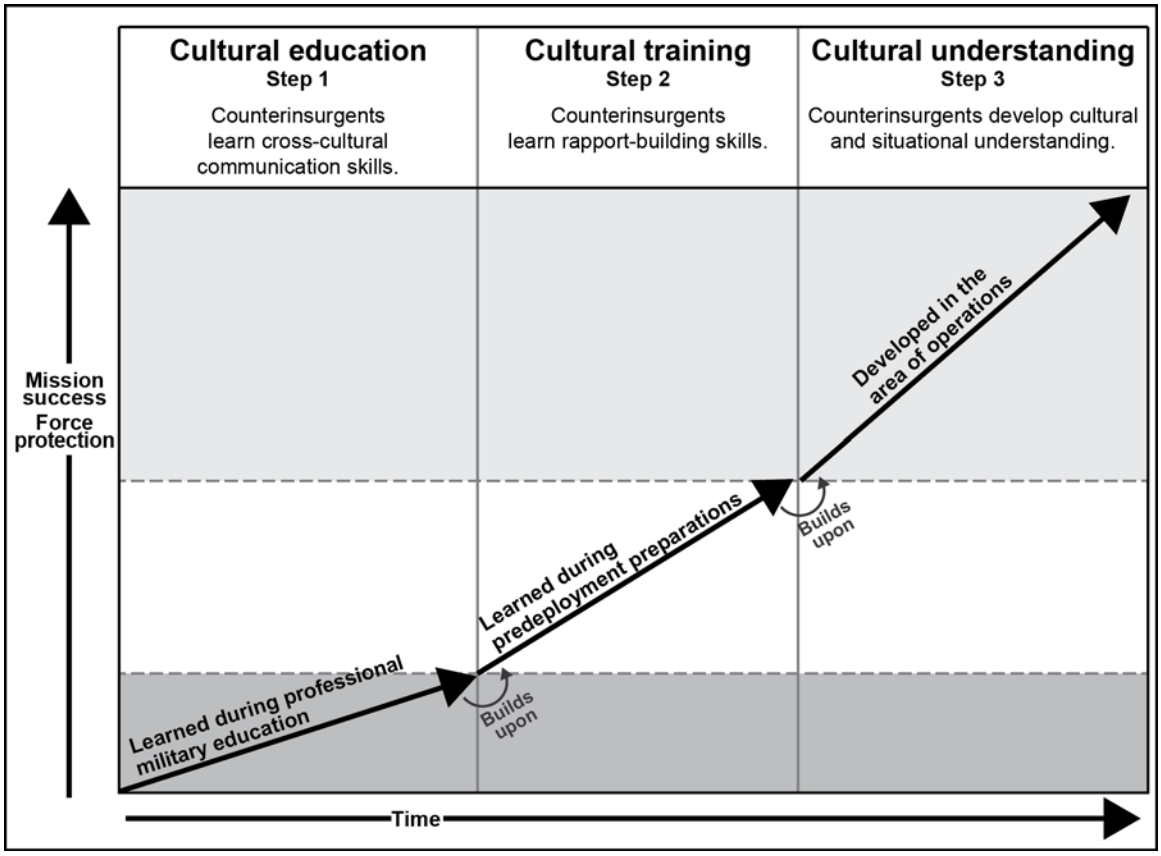



**Figure 4-2. Education, training, and understanding methodology**

4-9. Counterinsurgents develop questions come from a variety of topics to understand a culture. Answering these questions brings counterinsurgents to a focused understanding of the culture in their area of operations. Counterinsurgents need to understand an area of operations to achieve a high level of situational understanding. To understand culture, counterinsurgents need an understanding of various cultural influences. Cultural influences are categories of information used to study culture. Cultural influences include, but are not limited to, those items listed in Table 4-1. (See table 4-1.)

**Table 4-1 Cultural influences**

| ***Cultural influences*** | | |
|---|---|---|
| History | Philosophy | Science and technology |
| Political science | Literature | Geography |
| Sociology | Psychology | Law, crime, and punishment |
| Cultural anthropology | Education | Art, music, and entertainment |
| Language | Religion | Military arts and science |
| Economics | Communication | Food and drink |

## Step 1 - Cultural Education

4-10. Cultural education is the first step of the training, education, and understanding methodology. Counterinsurgents conduct cultural education to understand what culture is. Counterinsurgents learn culturally related topics, and they pose and answer questions about the components of a culture and how these components impact and define that culture.

4-11. Step 1 uses American culture as an example in paragraph 4-12 as it is familiar to U.S. counterinsurgents. Using the culture of the U.S. is a good tool to understand why the step 1 questions are important and how they each affect a culture.

4-12. During step 1, the purpose of cultural education is to understand a culture through asking and answering important questions related to various topics. For example, a counterinsurgent applying step 1 to U.S. culture would pose questions about U.S. history. A counterinsurgent might ask what are the major wars, massacres, and conflicts that shaped the U.S. The answer would include the American Revolution, the American Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War. A counterinsurgent would continue the line of inquiry by identifying how these wars shaped U.S. culture. For example, the American Revolution—

- Led to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
- Led to Independence Day (the 4th of July) becoming a significant U.S. holiday.
- Led to respect for the founding fathers and patriots.
- Led to the U.S. democratic system.

Step 1 questions are not designed to debate the validity, position, or controversy of the issues, but to help counterinsurgents understand that a topic defines and is describes part of a culture. However, often the more controversial a topic, the more likely it shapes a culture.

4-13. The point of the example step 1 questions in paragraph 4-12 is to demonstrate that developing a series of questions is important in understanding a culture. Counterinsurgents ask the same type of questions about the country or region where they will be deploying. Finally, counterinsurgents re-ask and answer the same questions in the specific area of operations or community the counterinsurgent eventually arrives in.

4-14. Step 1 questions are drawn mainly from the humanities and social sciences, but also include other aspects of a society. Each of these topics has a series of basic questions that reveal aspects of culture. The more questions counterinsurgents address, the greater their understanding of the culture both in scope (across many aspects of the culture) and in depth (the detail about any specific topic). Greater scope and depth of questions enables greater understanding of multiple aspects and perspectives of another culture.

4-15. The examples in paragraphs 4-27 through 4-44 use history, with related questions, example answers, and a discussion to show how to use the work sheet to educate counterinsurgents and help them in developing cultural understanding.

4-16. The American examples in paragraph 4-12 are broad generalizations designed to help counterinsurgents understand how questions can shape an understanding of a culture. A diverse group of Americans will probably present a diverse group of answers. However, the concept revolves around the development of a series of questions as opposed to the answers. Questions require a process of development when answers vary, eventually resulting in a comprehensive understanding of a culture.

## Step 2 - Cultural Training

4-17. Cultural training (step 2) is designed to use the same questions provided in step 1, but focus on theater specific questions. The intent is to prepare counterinsurgents for a specific region, during the pre-deployment training by developing a general cultural knowledge of that region.

4-18. The purpose of cultural training is to learn the general background of a theater of operations by using each question learned in step 1. Here are examples of step 2 questions under the topic of history for a notional foreign country. Counterinsurgents would ask what are the major wars, massacres, and conflicts that shaped the culture of this foreign country. Their answer might include the Crusades, the revolt against the Ottomans, post-colonial independence, and a war with northern neighbor. Focusing on that war with

their northern neighbor, counterinsurgents would identify how war with the northern neighbor shaped the country's culture. They would learn that this war—

- Made cross-border travel for trade more difficult.
- Made religious cross-border pilgrimages more difficult (or impossible depending on the year) due to border issues.
- Led to an annual holiday and national celebration marking victory.
- Led to the ever-growing power and respect of the military.
- Led to greater mistrust among part of the nation's population that share religious and even tribal ties with northern neighbor.

4-19. Counterinsurgents are aware of the source of answers to questions they ask. Answers may be one person's opinion, as the source may be a guest speaker, professor, scholar, or other member of the unit with a higher level of expertise. The point of step two questions is to gain a basic understanding of wars and conflicts in a country's history that have impacted the culture. However, each response may be different depending on whom and how counterinsurgents ask questions. Specifics are simply anecdotal at this point, since the same questions will be asked once counterinsurgents are in the theater of operations and deployed to a specific area of operation where the answers may vary.

## Step 3 - Cultural Understanding

4-20. Cultural understanding, step 3, focuses on a specific area of operations, including its cities, towns and communities. This is the final step, and it builds on the information developed in steps one and two. It takes counterinsurgents to specific issues that impact a particular community.

4-21. Counterinsurgents can ask, appreciate, and understand how each question shaped a specific group of people. A brigade commander will get a slightly different perspective when asking a question than a squad leader, but the general perspective will be the same. Answers to questions will provide a baseline that counterinsurgents can both use and understand.

4-22. In step 3, cultural understanding, counterinsurgents learn the culture of the people within a community or a specific area of operations. This step builds on the questions used in step 1 and the general theater of operations background addressed in step 2.

4-23. Step 3 questions may include questions under the topic of history. Counterinsurgents should ask what are the major wars, massacres, and conflicts that shaped the culture of this local community. Each of three groups (host-nation forces, insurgents, and the population) would be asked this question within the area of operations. Members of the local population might answer that “Many of the men here died in that meaningless war.” Members of the insurgency might answer “That war was started over the pride and greed of our past dictator, but we did learn how to fight in that conflict.” Host-nation forces might answer that “The military received a lot of support of the past regime. It was glorious and we toast it often.” Counterinsurgents would learn perspectives from these responses. For some, the war is controversial. Many locals are angered by the loss of life. This is a sore subject with many and not a good topic with civilians. Some of the host-nation military personnel consider it prideful since they were victorious regardless of the politics. Finally, insurgents may play on the fears of the population with talk of conscription.

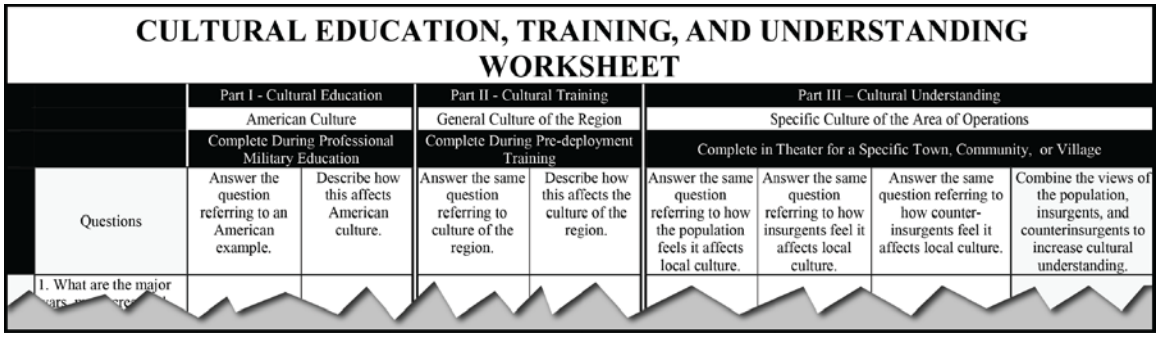
4-24. Counterinsurgents should be aware of the different answers given by different groups. Counterinsurgents need to actively collect all three perspectives to understand how each group thinks and to avoid saying the wrong thing to the wrong person or even to minimize U.S. presence at a public event celebrating the conflict.

4-25. The point is for counterinsurgents to gain a specific understanding of how this war has impacted the culture of the community. The specific impact means something personal to individuals within the community.

## Cultural Understanding Questions

The culture of a society is an intricate weave of many different perspectives. Each group, family, or person may look at a specific aspect of culture differently. Counterinsurgents can use the questions from each step of the education, training, and understanding methodology, asking people in the area of operations—

partnering units, local officials, merchants, refugees, interpreters, and contractors to gain situational understanding. The questions listed in paragraphs 4-27 through 4-44 provide counterinsurgents a starting point and the answers to those questions can be recorded on an education, training, and understanding work sheet. The cultural education, training, and understanding work sheet is available at the Army Training Network. (Access the Army Training Network website, and on the Army Irregular Warfare Center webpage, go to the section titled "Doctrine-Related Toolbox" and click on the file.) It is also available at the Army Irregular Warfare Center webpage. (See figure 4-3.)



**CULTURAL EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND UNDERSTANDING WORKSHEET**

| | Part I - Cultural Education | | Part II - Cultural Training | | Part III – Cultural Understanding | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | American Culture | | General Culture of the Region | | Specific Culture of the Area of Operations | | | |
| | Complete During Professional Military Education | | Complete During Pre-deployment Training | | Complete in Theater for a Specific Town, Community, or Village | | | |
| Questions | Answer the question referring to an American example. | Describe how this affects American culture. | Answer the same question referring to culture of the region. | Describe how this affects the culture of the region. | Answer the same question referring to how the population feels it affects local culture. | Answer the same question referring to how insurgents feel it affects local culture. | Answer the same question referring to how counter-insurgents feel it affects local culture. | Combine the views of the population, insurgents, and counterinsurgents to increase cultural understanding. |
| 1. What are the major | | | | | | | | |

**Figure 4-3. Cultural education, training, and understanding work sheet example**

### *History*

4-26. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the history of the area of operations. These include—

- What are the major wars, massacres, and conflicts that shaped the culture?
- Who are some of the great leaders, heroes, or legends in the nation's history?
- Who are some of the villains in the nation's history?
- Who founded the country? Who brought it to its modern form?
- What are some of the significant eras, generations, or major shifts in a nation that are significant?

### *Political Science*

4-27. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the political science of the area of operations. These include—

- What do the people think is the role of the government?
- Is the local government effective? Why or why not?
- What is the role and importance of civilian (non-governmental) community leaders?
- What are the major political parties?
- How was the most recent standing government formed?
- What civil and human rights do the people believe are most sacred?
- What are the major issues during elections?
- Does the country have a constitution, document, or guideline that lays out the role of government, the rights of the people, and the country's laws?
- What do the people think of democracy? What do the people know of democracy?
- What are the forms of government popular or familiar with the population? Does the population favor democracy, socialism, communism, theocracy, dictatorship, or monarchy?

### *Sociology*

4-28. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the sociology of the area of operations. These include—

- What are the important or significant institutions within society (both local and national)?
- Do the people identify themselves with organizations or have affiliations (tribes, religions, ethnic groups, provinces or regions, classes, occupations, or common languages)?
- What are the major grievances and underlying issues with the people?
- Are there a large number of homeless, refugees, squatters, or internally displaced people? What do the people think of them?
- What is customary in dealing with guests or strangers? Are most people friendly or guarded with strangers?
- What are some of the core beliefs of the people that define who they are?
- How do they correct social mistakes?
- What is the daily or weekly schedule of most citizens (when do they wake up, eat meals, work, have social time, or sleep?
- What is the customary clothing worn by men and women (both single and married) and young and old people)?
- What is the custom for facial hair for the men?
- How are the elderly treated in society? Are they revered, heads of the family and community, or marginalized?

***Cultural Anthropology***

4-29. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the cultural anthropology of the area of operations. These include—

- What has caused the cycles of violence that currently exist between warring groups? Did these groups ever live side-by-side in peace? What changed?
- What are some of the key cultural aspects of the local, native, or nomadic groups?
- What are the traditional roles of each family member?
- What are the common domestic animals? How important are they to the family?
- Who do the people look to for leadership (both governmental and nongovernmental)?
- What do the people believe is the origin of mankind (created by God or evolution)? Is it controversial within the society?
- How important is being on time in the society (at business and social gatherings)?

***Language***

4-30. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the language of the area of operations. These include—

- What are the common languages or dialects spoken?
- Standard words and phrases universal in all cultures (both formal and informal) including—
  - Hello.
  - Goodbye.
  - Please.
  - Thank you.
  - You are welcome.
  - How are you?
  - May I help you?
- Common sayings within a culture including—
  - God bless you.
  - God Save the Queen.
  - God's will.
  - Peace be with you.
  - Excuse me (pardon me).

- Toast (and what is appropriate for drinking coffee or alcohol).
- Grace or well wishes (and what is appropriate for meals).

- What are the common sayings, clichés, or slang?
- What is customary during greeting and departing (shaking hands, kissing, or bowing)?

***Economics***

4-31. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the economics of the area of operations. These include—

- What exports or local products are the people known for and the most proud of?
- Are bribes or "gifts" normal in dealing with businesses, government officials, or police? What is acceptable and what is considered corruption?
- What are the main economic issues that have arisen due to the conflict?
- What infrastructure is needed to support economic growth (for example electricity for factories, roads to move produce, and security to minimize extortion or control the black market)?
- Are prices fixed or negotiated in normal commerce? What are some tips and what is customary when negotiating prices?
- What is the daily wage of an average worker or laborer? Which jobs are considered honorable and less than honorable?
- What economic organizations are important and influential in the society (including labor unions and merchant guilds)?
- Is there a local black market? Who is involved, what products does it sell, and how is it tied to the community and local government?
- Is there a class or caste system that divides the people into superior (meaning privileged or entitled) and inferior or subordinate groups?
- Who are the minority groups? Are they at the top or bottom of the economic system? Is there resentment?

***Philosophy***

4-32. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the philosophy of the area of operations. These include—

- Do the people believe in reincarnation? What are the specific details of this belief?
- Do the people believe in destiny (fatalism) where everything is predetermined?
- How important are honor and respect? How do the people define honor and respect? How can dishonor be corrected?
- What is the primary philosophy and philosopher the people follow?

***Literature***

4-33. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the literature of the area of operations. These include—

- What types of stories do children read? What are the morals of these stories?
- What are some of the common stories and tales (sometimes in the oral tradition) that are passed down through families or communities?
- What are some of the famous and infamous characters in literature?
- What are some of the legends told about the nation's past?
- What are some of well-known sayings and famous quotes?
- Who are the popular or controversial books and authors (both past and present)?
- What are the major epics and fables that help encompass and define a society's culture?

***Psychology***

4-34. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the psychology of the area of operations. These include—

- Who or what do the people fear?
- Which of the following in this list is the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th in order of importance?
  - God.
  - Family.
  - Tribe.
  - Community.
  - Country.
  - Political party.
  - Ethnic group.
  - Labor union.
- Which order would the people place the following in (from least important to most important)?
  - Esteem needs (including self-esteem and respect for others).
  - Safety needs (including security and stability).
  - Self-actualization (including meeting one's potential).
  - Love needs (including belonging).
  - Physiological needs (including basic necessities).

***Religion***

4-35. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the religion of the area of operations. These include—

- What are the dominant religions (or sects)? Is there an official religion?
- What are some of the important religious events and holidays?
- What is the role of religious leaders in the local communities?
- What is traditional for funerals and mourning?
- What is the tradition for marriage, multiple wives, wedding ceremonies, and divorce?
- What are the religious taboos (gambling, drinking, abortion, or adultery)?
- Are there any tensions in the nation due to religious differences?
- What are the tenets of the dominant religions?
- How does religion define the people's concept of right and wrong?

***Communications***

4-36. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the communications of the area of operations. These include—

- How do people communicate with each other (including phones, face-to-face, the internet, or common areas where people gather)?
- How do the people receive information (by radio, television, newspaper, or meetings)?
- Where do the people traditionally gather to talk (at bars, tea or coffee shops, cafes, or markets)?
- Where do people talk that is more random or nontraditional (any long lines, waiting for day labor, traffic, or sporting events)?
- Who are the principal communicators or those who pass information within the local community that people rely on and trust?

***Science and Technology***

4-37. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the science and technology of the area of operations. These include—

- Does the country or local area have internet service? Who has service, where (at homes or internet cafes), what is it used for, and are there any local websites?
- Do locals have cell phones? What are the largest providers of services?
- Are there specific websites that people gravitate towards? Do they use social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Pinterest)?
- Do the insurgents use the internet? Why (for recruiting or passing information between insurgent elements)?
- What is the country credited for inventing or discovering? What do the people generally believe was invented or discovered by their countrymen?
- What are local medical needs, common illnesses and diseases, and levels of care?

***Geography***

4-38. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the geography of the area of operations. These include—

- What typically defines a community or neighborhood (including economic, ethnic, tribal, religious, and political factors)? Where are the boundaries of the neighborhoods?
- Where do new arrivals, immigrants, workers, or internally displaced persons come from? Why did they come? Are these seasonal, temporary, or permanent moves?
- What are the most significant local natural and man-made landmarks and structures (including religious, historical, and cultural structures)?

***Law, Crime, and Punishment***

4-39. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the law, crime, and punishment of the area of operations. These include—

- Who makes and enforces the laws in local communities? What justice can the victim or victim's family exercise?
- What are the traffic laws and are they followed?
- What types of organized crime exist? What symbols, colors, graffiti tags, or uniforms do local gangs or organized crime use? What is the significance (for example, to mark territory, identify targets, or cause intimidation)?
- How do the people feel about the death penalty?
- What would dishonor a family or group? How do they correct serious situations (including accidental death, abuses, and violations of honor) between groups or families (with blood money, equal retribution, or suing)?
- Does the country have a constitution, document, or guideline that lays out the role of government, the rights of the people, and the laws?
- Are there formal and informal justice systems? If so, which one do locals and officials prefer? How are they similar or different?

***Art, Music, and Entertainment***

4-40. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the art, music, and entertainment of the area of operations. These include—

- How significant is the national anthem to the population? What do the words mean?
- What types of music do the people listen to? What music is traditional and what is popular?
- What types of art or fine crafts are indigenous to the culture?
- What television programs do the people watch (soap operas, game shows, sports, or comedies)?
- What types of movies do the people like? Do the people like American movies? Who are their favorite actors (both national and international)?
- What are the favorite holidays and how are they celebrated? What types of food are prepared during holidays and special occasions?

- What are some of the most significant hobbies and recreation?
- What are the nation's favorite sports to play and watch? Who are the famous national athletes?
- What musical instruments are indigenous?

***Military Arts and Sciences***

4-41. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the military arts and sciences of the area of operations. These include—

- How respected is military service in the culture? How are veterans treated?
- Who are some of the famous military leaders in the country? Are there any famous revolutionaries in the nation's past?
- What is official oath of allegiance the military swears upon entering the service?
- What is the significance of the national flag? Are there official state, regional, or provincial banners or flags?
- What colors, banners, symbols, or uniforms do the insurgents or guerrilla forces use?
- What are the military holidays (for veterans, as memorials, for independence, or for some famous battle)?

***Food And Drink***

4-42. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the food and drink of the area of operations. These include—

- What are the typical or traditional meals and beverages? How are they prepared?
- How important is sharing a meal with someone?
- Are there any foods or drinks not consumed due to the culture or religion?

***Education***

4-43. Counterinsurgents should consider several questions regarding the education of the area of operations. These include—

- What is the literacy rate?
- Who goes to school (males, females, all, or optional)? What is the last year of general public education?
- Is religion involved in public school? How?
- What influence do local universities have (including as centers of knowledge, advice, political leadership, and centers of recruitment)?

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# Chapter 5

# Cultural Counterparts

Article #14: "While very difficult to drive, the Bedouin are easy to lead, if you have the patience to bear with them. The less apparent your interferences, the more your influence." T.E. Lawrence

## COUNTERPARTS

5-1. Cultural counterparts are important in counterinsurgency. Cultural counterparts include the host nation government and its military forces. Cultural counterparts also include members of the local population who help counterinsurgents.

## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES WITH COUNTERPARTS

5-2. U.S. personnel may adopt a number of practices to help in dealing with counterparts. U.S. personnel should—

- Ensure that population understand the presence of counterinsurgents.
- Find a basis for common interest with the local people.
- Try to understand why things are done the way they are done.
- Start with where the people are and what the people want.
- Work within the local cultural framework.
- Help people believe they can improve their situation.
- Be content with small beginnings.
- Use local organizations and recognize their leaders.
- Help the government get organized to serve the people.
- Train and utilize multipurpose local workers.
- Expect slow progress.
- Transfer controls constructively.
- Expect no gratitude from those helped.

### ENSURE THAT THE PRESENCE OF COUNTERINSURGENTS IS UNDERSTOOD

5-3. A counterinsurgent entering an area of operations works under the sponsorship of a military commander, mayor, village head, or some other recognized local leader. Prior to this, a counterinsurgent's arrival may need to be coordinated through the district, sector, or other appropriate local office. Clearances from the distant national, state, province, or sector governments cannot compensate for a clear, local explanation of why a counterinsurgent is in an area. This is especially true of small, isolated communities where it is unusual for a stranger to appear for even an hour without being acknowledged and accepted by local leaders. Without explanations from locally respected persons, the local population will arrive at its own explanations, often to the detriment of counterinsurgent efforts.

### FIND A BASIS FOR COMMON INTEREST WITH THE LOCAL PEOPLE

5-4. If a counterinsurgent shows appreciation for the local people as individuals, culture gaps and language barriers can be overcome and common ground can usually be found. A counterinsurgent should listen when the locals speak and should show interest in the things they show. Initial conversations usually center on universal matters and basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, health, and education. Over time, discussions may be naturally moved to matters counterinsurgents want the local population to

consider. A counterinsurgent should be received well if the counterinsurgent knows something about earlier host nation contributions in such matters as agriculture, folk art, religion, and architecture. Naturally, counterinsurgents will be more effective and appreciated if they can speak the local language.

## UNDERSTAND WHY THINGS ARE DONE THE WAY THEY ARE DONE

5-5. Although some local practices may seem strange at first, they generally have good reasons behind them. Counterinsurgents can discover these reasons with careful observation and a creative imagination. Food habits, family traditions, folk cures, and festive celebrations almost always have a great deal of human experience at their root. Counterinsurgents also need to be aware that many villages contain rival subgroups and factions. This tension needs to be accounted for when working with the local people.

## START WITH WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE AND WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT

5-6. The lives of traditional people across the world are usually simple and realistic. Counterinsurgents should find out what the local people really want most, and work with them to achieve this aim. The local people may want a public school or a road, while counterinsurgents may think the village most needs a well or a clinic. The needs that the local people express are often the best starting points, regardless of what counterinsurgents think are the comparative merits of various projects. Once their aims are addressed, the local people are likely to be appreciative and cooperative. They may begin to raise their expectations and become interested in working for other improvements. To address the initial desires of the people, counterinsurgents may need to call in personnel with the specialized skills needed for a particular project. Although this can initially result in a delay, it will help counterinsurgents to achieve greater cooperation over time.

## WORK WITHIN THE LOCAL CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

5-7. Counterinsurgents should understand such basic cultural matters as the ethnic backgrounds of the local population, family relationships, leadership patterns, value systems, and the technological level of the population (as related to their ways of making a living). Counterinsurgents also need some knowledge of local services such as health, education, communications, and transportation. Many cultural decisions will depend upon a counterinsurgent's assessment of the area of operations (for instance, the extent to which locally available physical resources can be used).

## HELP PEOPLE BELIEVE THEY CAN IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION

5-8. The vast majority of the traditional peoples of South America, Asia, and Africa live in largely static environments. Through their experiences with change, many of them are more fearful of losing status than they are hopeful of bettering their condition. Therefore, changes suggested by counterinsurgents are often viewed with fear. Concrete local projects that yield easily observed benefits can be helpful in convincing indigenous people that they can improve their situation and make them more willing to cooperate with counterinsurgents on other projects.

## BE CONTENT WITH SMALL BEGINNINGS

5-9. Change tends to come slowly in areas where there have been few changes in recent times. Counterinsurgents should remember that, historically speaking, most scientific developments in the West occurred only recently. Counterinsurgents should keep in mind that knowledge—technical or otherwise—is cumulative. Once a small beginning is achieved, greater activity and additional changes soon follow. It is easier to achieve momentum than it is to maintain it. The important thing is for counterinsurgents to make a start within as promising a framework as possible and with the support needed to sustain the momentum achieved.

## USE LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RECOGNIZE THEIR LEADERS

5-10. People respond best when their local organizations are recognized as important and useful. A program is unlikely to succeed unless it is carried forward within the local organizational framework. The

recognized local leaders should be consulted and encouraged to make contributions as much as they can. A well-conceived technical activity reflects credit on the local leaders associated with it. Attention should be given not only to the officials and the family heads of local groups, but also to the quiet, behind-the-scenes leaders. The surest way for an activity to be continued after counterinsurgents leave is for it to have been launched and carried forward within the local organizational and leadership framework.

## HELP THE GOVERNMENT GET ORGANIZED TO SERVE THE PEOPLE

5-11. In order for counterinsurgents to be most effective, they should understand the local government organization and how its activities fit into the overall scheme of the counterinsurgency. There should already be a set of agreements between various local agencies and the national government (usually through some sort of inter-ministerial council) that provides for a coordinated effort in servicing the varied needs of the local people. Counterinsurgents may need to work with appropriate agencies to help in getting such agreements made. If such agreements already exist, counterinsurgents should be careful to recognize and strengthen them. The work of a counterinsurgent in one area is most meaningful when properly coordinated with the contributions of individuals and agencies in other areas.

## TRAIN AND USE MULTIPURPOSE LOCAL WORKERS

5-12. Selected local young people can be trained and used as multipurpose workers to enable counterinsurgents to make the best use of their time. Otherwise, the influence of counterinsurgents is often restricted to where they are standing and their immediate vicinity. Furthermore, counterinsurgents may spend so much of their time establishing and maintaining rapport with indigenous personnel that they may become incapable of rendering any real service at all. The cultural gap between a local population and counterinsurgents is usually a formidable one because of the great educational and cultural differences between them. Often, counterinsurgents work with villagers who are poor, illiterate, and have few outside contacts. Volunteer or paid local workers (who serve as liaisons between the villagers and counterinsurgents) are often useful in getting the benefits of local subject-matter technical activities.

## EXPECT SLOW PROGRESS

5-13. As members of a local population begin to see successes from their joint efforts and begin to have new hope, they may naturally want a larger hand in their own matters. Counterinsurgents may sometimes feel local leaders may want to assume more responsibilities than they are able to fulfill. However, local leadership of projects and activities is a necessary part of the locals assuming responsibility. An increase in local leadership indicates that the local population is beginning to believe they can do more and more things for themselves. Counterinsurgents need to adjust their activities to the growing desires of the local population to help themselves.

## TRANSFER CONTROLS CONSTRUCTIVELY

5-14. Institution building can be a challenge for counterinsurgents. Counterinsurgents need to help the local people see how they can build the new—what they want—upon the foundations of the old—what they already have. From the beginning of a project, counterinsurgents need to envision, at least roughly, and discuss with local leaders the various types of training of local personnel needed, the means by which needed financial support can be had, and the several progressive transfers of responsibilities that are to be made before the full operation of the activity can be relinquished. If operating responsibility is transferred too early there likely will be some breakage—usually of material things. If, on the other hand, counterinsurgents keep control too long, the local people who have wanted to take over may become disillusioned with them (or even hate them) for not relinquishing control to them sooner. Counterinsurgents should work out with local leaders the timing of the phasing out of each technical activity that is started.

## EXPECT NO GRATITUDE FROM THOSE HELPED

5-15. People who benefit from assistance sometimes feel defensive. In accepting assistance, they are in a sense, admitting their own insufficiency. The self-esteem of a person, community, or a nation as a whole is a delicate thing. Therefore, counterinsurgents should not expect to receive thanks. Rather,

counterinsurgents should approach the local population in a spirit of fraternity and humility, taking satisfaction in the progress they may make. Counterinsurgents should do their job the best they can and accept work well done as is its own reward.

## Appendix A

# Working with Translators and Interpreters

## SELECTION AND USE OF INTERPRETERS

A-1. The importance of interpreters and translators cannot be overstated. Rarely can counterinsurgents achieve full command of the local language and various dialects, even if they are trained linguists. The use of interpreters is an alternative means of communicating with the local population, host-nation security forces, allies, or multinational forces. Interpreters and translators may be the only link between counterinsurgents and their counterparts or other important local nationals. Counterinsurgents should maximize interpreters' strengths and anticipate their weaknesses. The effectiveness and credibility of counterinsurgents to support security cooperation requirements may be directly attributable to the characteristics and talents of their interpreters.

### AGE, GENDER, AND RACE

A-2. Factors of gender, age, ethnicity, and race, are potentially troublesome and can seriously affect a counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgents should check with the in-country briefing teams for interpreter related taboos or favorable characteristics as the differences in culture, religion, ethnic group, political party affiliation, or country may vary greatly. In certain cultures, for example, the status of females in the society is such that they should not be used as interpreters with male sources, while in other cultures, a female may be the best way to approach an important local male leader. When the conflict that is the cause of counterinsurgents being committed involves more than one ethnic group (or tribal affiliation or religious group) using a translator from the opposing group may jeopardize the mission.

### TIME

A-3. When planning communications, counterinsurgents should allow additional time for interpreters to do their job. A 10-minute conversation may take up to 30 minutes, depending on the interpreter's ability. Counterinsurgents should plan accordingly when scheduling meetings.

### RANK AND MILITARY AFFILIATION

A-4. Counterinsurgents should consider rank when planning for interviews. If the interviewees are officers, counterinsurgents should have an officer or civilian act as interpreter. If the interviewees are enlisted personnel, an officer interpreter might intimidate them and stifle participation and interaction.

A-5. Interpreters are usually contracted civilians. They may not be accustomed to military methods, hardships, discipline, and courtesies. Therefore, counterinsurgents should train, inform, and educate their interpreters on common military terms, the overall mission and specific objectives of each meeting with counterparts, the military rank or political position of U.S. and foreign counterparts, and proper terms for addressing individuals. Counterinsurgents ensure that their interpreters always act respectfully.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A-6. When working with interpreters, there are a number of other factors that the counterinsurgents should consider. Counterinsurgents—

- Establish and maintain personal relationships of mutual trust with their interpreters. Often counterinsurgents' personal safety may depend upon their interpreter being personally loyal to them and warning them of threats or danger.
- Obtain their interpreter's concurrence with their overall mission objectives. If interpreters do not believe in the justification for a counterinsurgent's mission, they will have no personal commitment to mission success and may become untrustworthy.
- Learn their translator's family, religious, ethnic, political, and financial status.
- Behave ethically. Counterinsurgents do not ask for special favors or treatment, they do not accept gifts, and they are conscious of the perceptions of others when working with an interpreter of the opposite sex.
- Leverage the political, ethnic, family ties, or social status of their interpreter to open communications with key members of the government, political parties, and military forces.
- Learn from their interpreter about the politics, local laws, customs, cultural beliefs, and motivations of opposition groups or insurgents.
- Try to use two-man interpreter teams, as one may catch what the other missed or forgot.
- Avoid organizing interpreters into interpreter pools, unless absolutely necessary. This detracts from their personal loyalty to an individual counterinsurgent, causes inconsistencies in translation of key terms, and often is problematic because of the variations in the advisor's patterns of speech.
- Keep operations security in mind and assume their interpreters' first loyalty is to their country, not the U.S.
- Prepare the interpreter for technical terms in advance of meetings. The interpreter should know the subject matter being discussed (training of the interpreter or coached reading of U.S. doctrine or directives may be necessary before attempting to advise counterparts).
- Instruct their interpreters to translate their counterinsurgent's meaning and intent, which are normally more important than specific words.
- Double-check that the interpreters understand the communication. Many may attempt to save face by purposely concealing their lack of understanding.
- Instruct the interpreter to mirror the tone and personality of advisor's speech.
- Instruct the interpreter not to interject his own questions or personality.
- Avoid such phrases as, “Tell him that...” and “I would like to have you say...”
- Avoid looking at the interpreter during discussions and remain focused on the other person.
- Break thoughts into small, logical, translatable segments.
- Avoid idioms, jokes, military jargon, and slang.
- Control the interpreter. Counterinsurgents should inform interpreters to never ask questions of their own and to never paraphrase the interviewer's question or the source's answers.
- Instruct the interpreter to never hold back information given by the source. Such withholding, regardless of how insignificant the interpreter may feel it to be, may adversely affect the conversation and the mission.
- Test the interpreter periodically for accuracy, loyalty, and honesty. Counterinsurgent control of interpreters is increased if they know that they are periodically tested.
- Avoid bullying, criticizing, or admonishing interpreters in the presence of the source. Counterinsurgents should criticize in private to avoid lowering their interpreters' prestige, and thereby impairing their effectiveness.

## CHECKING INTERPRETERS

A-7. The use of interpreters and translators seems very straightforward; the counterinsurgent simply speaks in English and the interpreter repeats what is said in the appropriate language. However, counterinsurgents should not take translation lightly. Obviously, language is vital to communications across cultures, but language can also be the source of many misunderstandings in intercultural communications.

A-8. Translators and (especially) interpreters are seldom native speakers of both languages. Normally, they are native speakers of one language with training in the other. This means that they have a good command of the formal language when used correctly and by a speaker with an accent they are familiar with.

## CHALLENGES WHEN WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

A-9. There are a number of challenges counterinsurgents may encounter when working with interpreters. These challenges include—

- Translation.
- Pronunciation.
- Word choice and meaning.
- Slang and idiomatic expressions.

## TRANSLATION

A-10. In communicating with people of a different culture, counterinsurgents should use at least a few words or phrases in their language. It is even better to have sufficient command of the language to be able to ensure that the interpreter or translator is not straying from the desired message.

A-11. There is a strong tendency to translate messages literally (word-for-word) from the speaker's language to the target language. This technique may work well, but it can lead to embarrassing situations.

## PRONUNCIATION

A-12. Misunderstandings in intercultural communications can arise even when two cultures use the same language. Even though English is used widely throughout the world, regional differences exist in pronunciation. This can make it difficult for speakers of English from two different countries—or even two different regions of the same country—to understand one another.

A-13. For example, English is one of the official languages of Singapore. It is often used as a lingua franca—for official communication—between the various language subgroups on the island, and English is often used by government officials and businessmen to communicate with their countrymen. However, English-speaking foreigners frequently have difficulty understanding the Singaporeans because of the differences in pronunciation. To Americans, Singaporeans do not clearly pronounce words with similar beginning and ending sounds. Words such as tree and three, or pen and pan, become garbled. This can lead to misunderstandings between people despite their sharing a common language.

## WORD CHOICE AND MEANING

A-14. Counterinsurgents should use caution in selecting words to translate. Ambiguous and unfamiliar words should be avoided.

A-15. The same word may have different interpretations in different cultures. In most parts of Asia, for example, the word family refers to parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and so on. To an American or European, family usually refers to the immediate family. If two colleagues—one Asian and one American—were to carry on a conversation about their families, they may think that they are talking about the same thing, but actually they are not.

## UNFAMILIAR WORDS

A-16. The use of unfamiliar words can sometimes lead to expensive mistakes. For example, in a fictional discussion between an American businessman and a Japanese customer, the American concludes by saying, “Well then, our thinking is in parallel.” They bid goodbye, but months pass without further word. Finally, the frustrated American inquires as to why. The Japanese customer replied, “You used a word I did not understand-parallel. I looked it up in my dictionary, and it said parallel means two lines that never touch.” The customer concluded that the American businessman thought their positions were irreconcilable.

A-17. To avoid miscommunications, counterinsurgents should take simple measures to achieve the greatest possible clarity in meaning. Counterinsurgents should choose words carefully, ensuring they are unambiguous and easily understood. Qualifications and definitions should be provided for terms that are likely to be misunderstood. Finally, counterinsurgents should never assume that their message was correctly understood. Instead, they should ask for feedback to ensure the audience clearly understood the message as intended.

## SLANG AND IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

A-18. Cultures develop their own slang and idiomatic expressions that may be foreign to other cultures using the same language. For example, Australians commonly refer to a friend as a "mate," but in the U.S., the word "mate" primarily refers to a spouse. Idiomatic expressions can be especially confusing for non-native speakers who are not very proficient with the language. For example, "pulling someone's leg" is a common idiomatic expression for joking around, but an interpreter unfamiliar with this expression would be puzzled because, obviously, he had not even touched the speaker-let alone pulled on the speaker's leg. Counterinsurgents avoid using idiomatic English expressions, and they should learn the idiomatic expressions used in by the local population in the area of operations.

# Source Notes

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2-1 "Live with him …": T.E. Lawrence. "The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence." *The Arab Bulletin* (20 Aug 1917).

3-1 "Get to know their …": T.E. Lawrence. "The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence." *The Arab Bulletin* (20 Aug 1917).

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5-1 "While very difficult …": T.E. Lawrence. "The 27 Articles of T.E. Lawrence." *The Arab Bulletin* (20 Aug 1917).

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# Glossary

The glossary lists acronyms.

## SECTION I – ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| **ADP** | Army doctrine publication |
| **ADRP** | Army doctrine reference publication |
| **ATP** | Army techniques publicaton |
| **CJCSI** | Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction |
| **DA** | Department of the Army |
| **FM** | field manual |
| **JP** | joint publication |
| **U.S.** | United States |

## SECTION II – TERMS

None

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Army Training Network, Army Irregular Warfare Center webpage at https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dpID=475 or https://atn.army.mil/media/docs/Cultural_Education_Training_Understanding_Worksheet.docx.

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DA Form 2028. *Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms.*

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