

Unit 1: Cultural Awareness

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Broad implications of culture
- Reasons cultural awareness is important for military intelligence linguists
- Cultural awareness advantages possessed by military personnel
- American and Central/South Central Europe (SCE) values expressed through proverbs
- Contrasting SCE and American values
- Differing perceptions of time
- Steps to build cultural sensitivity
- Barriers to cultural understanding
- Treatment plan for cultural shock

Identify

- Culture
- Peace Operations
- Proverbs
- Monochronic and polychronic time
- Creative generalizations
- Perceptions
- Ethnocentrism, Prejudice, Stereotypes, Culture shock

Realize

- Ease in making cultural misperceptions
- Continuous learning required for cultural awareness
- Cultural variety experienced in American society
- Interconnectedness of religion and culture
- Information glut as a barrier to understanding
- Manifestations of culture shock

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"The new military needs soldiers [sailors, airmen, marines] who can deal with a diversity of peoples and cultures, who can tolerate ambiguity, take initiative, and ask questions."

-- Alvin and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-War, p. 74.

"You have to understand the culture you're getting involved in. We never do a good job of cultural intelligence, of understanding what makes people tick, what their structure is, where authority lies, what is different about their values and their way of doing business."

-- U.S. Marine Corps general, remarks to 1994 U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Class

"The central elements of any culture or civilization are language and religion..."

In coping with identity crisis, what counts for people are blood and belief, faith and family. People rally to those with similar ancestry, religion, language, values, and institutions and distance themselves from those with different ones."

-- Professor Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations, pp. 59, 126.

"When he [SGT. Mark Flitton] and his teammates started making their rounds in July 1997, Flitton said, '[W]e found out the people [Bosnia and Herzegovina citizens] were scared to death of SFOR [Stabilization Force]. We worked real hard to say, 'Hey! We're good Joes.' They finally realized that SFOR is not a threat, that we could actually help them, that we did help them."

--"A New Breed of Pointman in Bosnia," Army Times, 17 Nov 1997, p. 14

I. Culture--What is it?

"The values, beliefs and attitudes influencing behavior and relationships within a given group."

(Richard Mead, International Management, p. 6.)

That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feeling. Language, values, customary behaviors; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking; these attributes describe social characteristics of a people.

This total way of life of a group--passed on from generation to generation--is the shared culture of that populace.

II. Why is Cultural Awareness Important for Military Linguists?

1. Peace Operations Historically, military strategists often viewed cultural factors on the battlefield as insignificant. Recent peace operations and combined United Nations/multinational ventures however, illustrate the importance of these considerations.

"Population distribution, ethnic backgrounds, languages, religious beliefs, and political loyalties of civilian personnel all emerge as significant components of successful intelligence collection."
(FM 100-23, Peace Operations, p. 46.)

2. Intelligence Including the cultural dimension enables a more complete intelligence picture. In a recent Parameters article, Dr. Paul Bellutowski, of the U.S. Marine Corps Command and Staff College, wrote...



"Understanding culture may help to answer important military and civil questions such as the will of the enemy to fight, the determination of resistance groups to persevere, or the willingness of the populace to support insurgents or warlords." (Parameters, Spring 96, p. 34.)

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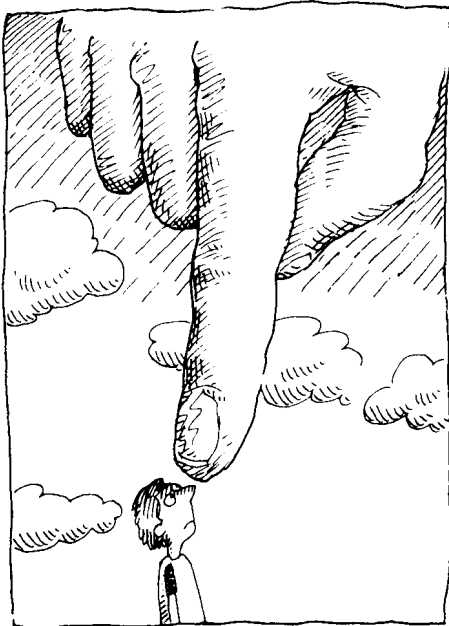
On the strategic level, this dimension influences directions of campaigns and coalition partnerships. On a tactical level, cultural awareness promotes fuller understanding of sources, and the worldviews from which intelligence data arises.

3. Allies Awareness of distinct practices and ways facilitates harmonious interaction with Allied counterparts.

When perceptions become rigid, negative attitudes (stereotypes) set in. Communication falters, animosities fester and suspicions arise.

Cultural awareness, on the other hand, of one's own and another's culture, enhances communication and facilitates positive interaction between peoples.

Guidance outlined for commanders in Field Manual 100-5, Operations, is instructive. Combined operations, involving military forces of two or more nations, display the need for cultural awareness by U.S. personnel.



"Differences in work ethic, standards of living, religion, and discipline affect the way nations approach war. Commanders cannot ignore these differences because they represent potential major problems."

Even seemingly minor differences, such as dietary restrictions or officer/soldier relationships, can have great impact. Commanders may have to accommodate religious holidays, prayer calls, and other unique

cultural traditions that are important to allies."
(FM 100-5, p. 5-2)

Desert Storm/Shield accentuated the need for cultural sensitivity. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf's knowledge of Saudi Arabian ways enabled him to adjust to customs of the Arabian Peninsula.

Guidelines for U.S. Army staff included sensitivity to traditional practices, acceptance of the situation, and patience. Writes General Schwarzkopf, "I'm not known for being patient, but to do the job there [Saudi Arabia], that's just what I was. Decisions that would require fifteen minutes in Tampa or Washington would often consume three hours in Riyadh, as we sipped coffee, told stories and philosophized." (It Doesn't Take a Hero, p. 334.)

For Desert Storm/Shield/Farewell Chief of Logistics LTG Gus Pagonis, the total experience was one of continuous learning. Recognition of the importance of religion, non-verbal communication patterns, gender issues and nuances of gestures and taboos played a big role.

Displaying calmness and self-control in all settings became foremost.



"I am a blunt person, and I'm not known as a paragon of patience. But I soon learned that in the Middle East, you have to go slow to go fast. And so we did." (Moving Mountains, p. 107.)

4. Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Flexibility

Linguists--whatever their specific MOS--must realize their language abilities cause them to be seen as subject matter experts by their command. Depending on the need or crisis at hand, linguists may be called upon to interpret, translate, or serve as cultural advisors to the command. These varying tasks may be assigned in addition to specific skills required of interrogators, voice intercept operators or analysts.

Former VII Corps (during Desert Storm) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) commander General Frederick M. Franks, Jr. wrote concerning the flexibility and adaptability required of today's military member.

"We will not have room for specialists. We must develop a team that plays both ways, a team that is scrappy and willing to perform many missions, a team that is versatile and agile." (FM 100-23, Peace Operations, p. 87.)

III. Cultural Awareness Advantages Possessed by Military Personnel

1. Diversity The United States military is the largest, most diverse organization in our nation. Ethnic, racial and regional diversity is built in to the force structure.



There is much variety in our country, even though a common culture centered in the Constitution binds all Americans together. Consider the differences displayed depending on whether one comes from an urban/rural, suburb/inner city setting.

Regional contrasts--from the Eastern establishment to the South, Southern California to the Mid West--make for distinct ways of looking at the world. Ethnic backgrounds, whether Native American, Hispanic, African

American, Caucasian, Asian American--tend to influence one's overall perspective.

Responses to social/political issues also express this variety. Think of reactions to the following topics:

- The federal deficit
- Gun control
- Ordination of women
- Gays/lesbians in military
- Abortion
- Home schooling
- Women in combat
- Priests and marriage
- Pay for professional athletes

With many of these topics, responses vary. Emotions simmer. Discussions often become so heated that rational dialogue leaves the picture. When we realize the volatile nature of disagreements to issues within our own land, then we can more readily empathize with differences expressed by individuals within other countries.

2. Basic Training



Basic training instills values which contribute to successful handling of new, culturally sensitive settings.

3. DLIFLC In the laboratory of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center classroom, we're privileged to observe manners, customs and folkways of instructors who come from many different countries and cultures.

4. Joint Operations The joint environment within our Armed Forces promotes respect and mannerliness which can easily be adapted to new settings.

5. Being American Living daily with the variety possessed by our own society constitutes a real cultural awareness advantage.



IV. Values

1. Values Expressed Through Proverbs Proverbs--short, pithy sayings commonplace within a culture--also describe basic values of a people. Customary sayings of Americans include:

- A penny saved is a penny earned.
- Time is money.
- Early to bed, early to rise, makes a person healthy, wealthy, and wise.
- God helps those who help themselves.
- No rest for the wicked.
- You've made your bed, now go sleep in it.
- The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
- A stitch in time saves nine.
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
- Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone.
- Never let them see you sweat.

Central/South Central Europe (SCE) proverbs and sayings adapted from Yale Richmond's From Da to Yes, and DLIFLC Serbian and Croatian faculty input, offers contrasting perspectives.

- **As long as language lives, the nation is not dead.** (Sve dok je jezik zhiv i nacija je zhiva/nacija nije mrtva. Nacija je zhiva sve dok je jezik zhiv).
- **Thieves increase with the making of new laws.** (Broj lopova raste s novim zakonima).
- **Good coffee should be [strong] like the devil, hot like hell, and sweet as a kiss.** (Dobra kava treba biti jaka kao djavo [vrag], vrucha kao pakao i slatka kao poljubac).
- **Thieves nowadays are not in the forests but in the offices.** (Danashnji lopovi nisu u shumi, oni su u uredima/kancelarijama).
- **The fish grows rotten from the head.** (Riba smrdi od glave/Riba se kvari od glave).
- **Enough is better than much.** (Dosta je bolje nego mnogo).
- **Who bargains much is the real buyer.** (Tko se mnogo cjenka, pravi je kupac./Pravi kupac je onaj tko se mnogo cjenka).
- **An honest man does not break his word.** (Poshten chovjek ne krshi svoju riječ./Poshten chovjek drzhi riječ).
- **Poor in goods, rich in joys.** (Siromashan stvarima, bogat zadovoljstvima).
- **Know a lot, talk a little.** (Tko mnogo zna, malo govori).
- **No one is perfect.** (Nitko nije bez mane. Nitko nije savrshen/perfektan).
- **As poor as a church mouse.** (Sirmashan kao crkveni mish).
- **I wish you luck!** (Neka ti sve cvijeta).
- **To live nicely.** (Zhivjeti kao chovjek).





- **Let him go.** (Shiroka ti cesta./Shirok to put).
- **You can't fool with him.** (Nema kod njega/nje cile-mile).
- **Tempest in a teapot.** (Bura u chashi vode).
- **Dead drunk.** (Pijan kao chep).
- **We can't get rid of him.** (Prilijepio se kao chichak).

2. American Values In his book entitled American Ways, author Gary Althen identifies the following common American values and assumptions.

- **Individualism and privacy**



Seeing ourselves as separate individuals, responsible for our own lives and destinies, is perhaps our most common characteristic as a people.

- **Equality** Overall, we have a deep faith in the fundamental way all people are equal, with no one born superior to anyone else.
- **Informality** Speech, dress, posture, and casualness all indicate the general unpretentious manner in which we approach life.

- **Future, change, progress** The future, rather than history and tradition, is our most pressing concern. Prospects for growth and development become primary considerations.
- **Goodness of humanity** We tend to see people as basically good.



The widespread emphasis on education, training, and self-improvement--where individuals through effort can better themselves--demonstrates this value.

- **Time**

We place efficiency, organization and disciplined use of time as a high priority. The "immediate instant," becomes the focus.

Because our "daily life is among the fastest on earth...Time horizons are truncated...." (Toffler, War and Anti-War, p. 248.)

In contrast, the South Slavic and Central/South Central Europe world seems preoccupied with righting past wrongs--regardless of how many centuries have past. A collective national memory and psyche does not tolerate the forgiving and forgetting of key historical experiences.

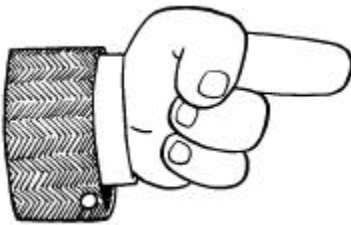
- **Achievement, action, work, materialism** Someone who gets the job done is highly valued. Motivated achievers become valued associates. Successful, action oriented, on-the-go individuals who make something of themselves receive high regard.
- **Directness and assertiveness**

We practice a frank, open and direct way of communicating. Laying all the cards on the table and getting to the point speak to this straightforward manner practiced by many Americans.

3. Central/South Central Europe Values In his book, From Da to Yes, Yale Richmond identifies the following perspectives. Mr. Richmond bases his findings on over thirty years of day-to-day contact with these nations in transition. While on assignments with the Department of State, U.S. Information Agency, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the National Endowment for Democracy, Yale Richmond oversaw culture, education and science exchanges with the peoples of this region in Europe.

- **Europeans** The peoples of this area see themselves as the heartland of the European continent. Over 200 million people live in the region, roughly three-fourths of the U.S. population, yet they are packed into a land area no more than one-quarter the size of the U.S.

DLIFLC Serbian and Croatian professor Mike Vezilich points out that the "East European" term, in these rapidly changing times, should be avoided. It carries negative, Communist-era connotations. "Nations in transition" is becoming the current preferred expression.



Descriptions of these nations in transition as "postcommunist," "former members of the Warsaw Pact," "former Soviet bloc countries"--which undermine current autonomy and sense of national pride--should be avoided. Some even object to "former Yugoslavian area of..." or "the Balkan country of..."

- **History** At various times throughout her long history, portions of these nations in transition have been ruled by Romans, Tatar-Mongols (twelfth century Chinese and Turkish tribes), Germans, Swedes, Hungarians, Russians, Austrians and Turkish peoples. Dates and events of this extended history, though long past, can be a routine part of everyday conversations.

Military linguists traveling to this region would be wise to immerse themselves in the history, culture, and literature of the region, in order to build bridges with members of the local populace.

- **Friends and family** As part of an older clan society, which emphasizes an extended agricultural family heritage, many SCE peoples place great value upon their family and friends. During the decades of authoritarian Communist rule, family members and close friends were often the only ones a person could trust.



Personal contact--a familiar face--became the grounds for significant interaction and business dealings. Networking--knowing the right people and cultivating such relationships--presently is increasingly important. Favors, gifts, smiles, drinks and food are critical factors in establishing such credibility and trust.

- **Customs**

Use of titles before names, "Doctor," "Professor," "Engineer," may be commonplace. Understatement in language, leaving the hearer to interpret allusions or nuances of thought, may be the norm. Many East Europeans will not say "no" directly. "It is under study...we'll have to see...we'll try" may indicate a polite no or cautious, uncertain approval.

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Despite the emphasis on family, friends and networking, some individuals, due to traditions of courtly, well-mannered behavior, may be uncomfortable with first name informality.

- **Home Hospitality** The midday meal, including soup and hearty bread, is the big meal of the day. Dinners can last for hours, with animated discussion, music, and singing being an integral part of the festivity.



- **Alcohol** Alcoholic drinks are commonplace and difficult to avoid. North and east of the Tatra mountains (Poland, the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine) is a vodka, beer zone. South lies the fruit brandy zone--konyak of Slovakia, barack (bahr-ahtsk) of Hungary, tsuica (tsooi-kah) of Romania, sljivovica (SHLEE-voh-veets-ah, plum brandy) and rakija (rah-kee-yah, generic Turkish term for grape, plum, fruit brandy common with Adriatic Croats and Montenegrins) of the South Slavs.

U.S. military personnel must know the "rules of engagement" regarding alcohol use with members of the local population. Within military circles of these nations in transition especially, an unwritten warrior ethic commends the officer or noncommissioned officer who is able to hold the most liquor, while remaining alert and lucid in the process.



- **Language** Many languages are present these nations in transition. From the Soviet past, schools offered Russian. Within SCE, English and German were the secondary languages of choice since tourism and catering to Western

tourists was a primary money-making industry. Yet, the truth of the Czech proverb "As long as the language lives, the nation is not dead" is evident in the importance placed upon a people's distinct language throughout the region.

- **Capital cities** In many nations in transition, the capital city represents the ethos and culture of the entire nation to a much greater extent than state or national capitals in the United States. Being centers not only of government, but also finance, culture, media and industry, capitals of these nations in transition embody the cultural "soul" of the nation. This cultural concentration also engenders a great urban/rural contrast within most nations.

The following country and regional capitals express this importance.

Slovenia (sloh-VHEN-ee-ah) with capital Ljubljana (lyoo-BLYHAN-ah); **Croatia** (croh-AY-shah) with Zagreb (ZAH-grehb); **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (hertz-eh-GOH-vee-nah) with Sarajevo (sahr-ah-YAY-voh); **Macedonia** (mas-i-DOH-nee-ah) with Skopje (SKOHP-lyee-ah); and **Serbia and Montenegro** (SUHR-bee-ah/mon-tah-NEE-groh) with Belgrade (bel-GRAYD).

Regional areas of Serbia and Montenegro include Vojvodina (voi-VOH-dee-nah) with Novi Sad (noh-vee-SAHD); Kosovo (KOH-soh-voh) with Pristina (PREESCH-tee-nah); Montenegro (mon-teh-NEE-groh) with Podgorica (pohd-GOHR-eets-ah). Croatian regional capitals include Dalmatia (dahl-MAY-shah) with Split (spleet) and Slavonia (slah-VOH-nee-ah) with Osijek (oh-see-yehk). For Herzegovina, Mostar (moh-stahr) is a primary city.

- **Man's world** Though women are deferred to and flattered, traditional attitudes toward equality remain. Under communism, equality was more an economic necessity than cultural imperative. Women were often distant from political seats of power. They lived a

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burdened existence, carrying both household and vocational responsibilities.

"As of 1990, the women's movement had yet to achieve significant power in Yugoslavia...rapid industrialization...created a new form of patriarchal society in which women were treated as sex objects exploited in the workplace and at home. Those allegations were backed by the wide availability of hard-core pornography everywhere in the country and the fact that most working women were still expected to do traditional household chores." (Country Studies--Yugoslavia, p. 104.)



However, currently among cosmopolitan South Slavic women, feminism receives much attention.

- **Environmental degradation** Pollution, with contaminated soil, foul air and shocking national health statistics, points to the dismal state of the environment in many countries in transition. Along the Adriatic Sea, however, tourism and the lack of a heavy industrial base contributes to high environmental awareness/need for anti-pollutant laws.

The impact of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is still felt. Heavy personal use of tobacco is often high.

- **Communist past** Throughout many of the countries in transition, due to the long term influence of totalitarian regimes in the region, the mentality of communism continues to persist. Pluralism, democracy, tolerance, civil society and human rights may be common buzzwords, yet they are poorly understood. A manner of thinking prone to "letting the experts do it," being told what to do and hesitancy toward any entrepreneurial risk is commonplace.

In the SCE however, Tito's system of allowing "self-management" produced a successful business cadre. Slovenia, and to a lesser extent Croatia, as shown by their relatively high per capita income, benefited from this policy.

- **Mafia** This term applies to a wide range of activities, many legitimate, some not. Mafia applies to former members of the communist elite and their families, who reemerged as rich members of current society. Lawful businesspeople, resented for their success, may also be designated Mafia. And, on the extreme fringes, gangsters and racketeers receive the more traditional Mafia label.



- **Blame** Many of the countries in transition have a tendency to blame others for their difficulties. The biggest culprit is the former Communist system. In addition, centuries of being a conquered and subjugated people has left a hard mindset in place. Minorities and neighboring nations are often accused for current troubles. Under economic hardship and societal unrest, ethnic intolerance simmers just below the surface.
- **Crossing cultures** In providing technical assistance to countries in transition, author Yale Richmond discovered two cross-cultural approaches, each possessing validity.

(1) The "talk with" approach listens, dialogues and consults before offering advice. Fostering equality and respect leads to productive action, where advice is followed.

(2) A "talk to" format realizes the authoritarian mindset of over forty-five years of Communist rule. Recognizing that many, at the lower management levels, have been aliens in the decision making process, a direct and

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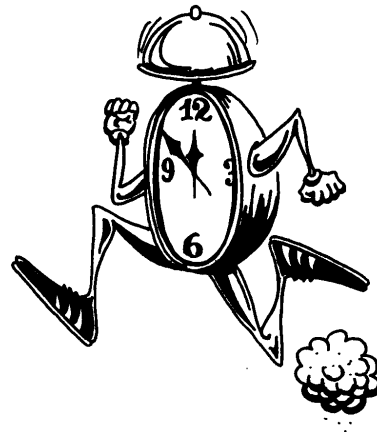
straightforward approach--"this is the way to..."--
-is best.

Either the "talk with" or "talk to" style, when used with respect, patience and understanding, may be valid for peoples of the nations in transition.

Street smarts In countries of Central/South Central Europe, individuals who are innovators, improvisers, resourceful and ingenious (snalaziti se) receive high regard. To be termed as such a clever, astute person is the highest compliment one can receive. Even though their ideas may appear strange to many Americans, these "street smart" individuals are the "movers and shakers" in society. They are the ones who have figured out the hard way what it takes to get things done.

4. Perceptions of Time

Another way to contrast Americans and many other peoples of the world is to analyze the patterns of time as described by Edward T. Hall in his book Understanding Cultural Differences.



Monochronic (one thing at a time) tends to describe many Americans. **Polychronic** (involved with many things at once) people comprise most of the world's population.

For many East and European peoples, there is a tendency not to be as preoccupied as Americans with efficient use of time.



Monochronic People:

- Do one thing at a time.
- Concentrate on the job.
- Take time commitments seriously (deadlines, schedules).
- Are committed to the job.
- Adhere religiously to plans.
- Are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration.
- Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend.
- Emphasize promptness.
- Are accustomed to short-term relationships.



Polychronic People:

- Do many things at once.
- Are highly distractible and subject to interruptions.
- Consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible.
- Are committed to people and human relationships.
- Change plans often and easily.
- Are more concerned with those to whom they are closely related than with privacy.
- Borrow and lend things often and easily.
- Base promptness on the relationship.
- Have a strong tendency to build lifetime relationships.

V. Developing Cultural Sensitivity

How can we effectively build our own cultural sensitivities? Certainly abilities acquired throughout basic training help. The joint military service environment promotes sensitivity. Even observing language instructors can assist. Wholehearted dedication is necessary. But what attitudes promote positive interaction with those from another culture? Can we develop cultural awareness "templates" to enhance our intelligence-gathering capabilities?

1. Maintain Creativity When Using Generalizations

Given the great diversity found in many of the world's regions and cultures, it is difficult to accurately make broad, conclusive statements about others. Cultures and peoples are multi-layered, complex entities. With care, we can discern commonalities and differences between cultures.

Put another way, *"In some ways, all people are alike. In some ways, groups of people resemble each other. In some ways, every person is unique"* (Althen, *American Ways*, p. xii.)

Richard Mead, in his work entitled International Management, describes the use of generalizations. Overgeneralizing leads easily to stereotypes and prejudices. Sweeping statements routinely introduce incorrect conclusions. Yet...



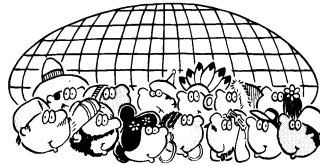
Creative generalizations, concepts tempered with care, refinement, always subject to modification and open to change--enable us to operate efficiently. When kept dynamic, flexible and tentative, this reasoning enables us to make intelligible statements about others.

2. Practice Civility Seeing other people as individuals like ourselves, whose way of life has meaning and continuity, promotes understanding.

Treating ideas, manners and customs with respect deepens our capacity to appreciate another's culture. Being civil--courteous, considerate and polite--opens doors for dialogue and discovery.

3. Realize the Interconnectedness of Religion and Culture Our American society respects the division between church and state. The Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion for all United States citizens. A spiritual/civil division often exists. Many other countries recognize no such differentiation.

In many areas of the world, politics, economics and government are not divorced from religious belief.



As a modernization process occurs across many parts of the globe, religion--rather than decreasing in importance--actually becomes a force for political and societal renewal.

Religious persuasion runs deep. It permeates many societies. Our recognition of, and appreciation for, this intensity of religious expression enhances sensitivity to others.

4. Be Aware of Differing Perspectives. The following story, adapted from The Unsolborne Book of World Religions, illustrates the wide assortment of viewpoints which can be present (see p. 13).

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A beast of mystery appeared in the land of the blind. The ruler sent his advisors out to investigate. Waiting until the mysterious beast was sleeping, the touched it.

The blind man touching the elephant's side said "It's like a wall."

The man touching the tusk reported, "It's like a spear."

"It's like a fan" (the ear).

"It's like a tree" (the leg).

"It's like a snake" (the trunk).

"It's like a rope" (the tail).

The blind men described parts of the same thing--a sleeping elephant. So different cultures can appear differently, depending on our perspective.

In some ways, we all are like the blind men and the elephant, limited by our own perspectives of a given culture or group of people and failing to see the variety of viewpoints present.

VI. Barriers to Cultural Understanding

Many obstacles check our full appreciation of other cultures/religions. The glut of information available--library circulations, Internet contacts, television newscasts and documentaries, newspapers and magazines--can overwhelm with their images and data. Uncomplicated, simple presentations fail to account for subtle, nuanced distinctions of interpretation and meaning.



Our own "spiritual blinders" may inhibit an objective, accurate appraisal of other religious/cultural systems.

Take a moment and consider the following terms. Ask yourself: What associations come to mind? Are the thoughts negative or positive? What difficulties arise when we categorize persons in such ways?

- Nerd
- Raghead
- Bubba
- Bimbo
- Charlie
- Commie
- Fundamentalist
- Dirtbag

Perceptions--our mental grasp of others and their ideas of us--differ, especially in cross-cultural settings. Recognition of our own and others unique perceptions clarifies and deepens understanding.

Common notions of Americans held by many people in other countries include:

- Outgoing, friendly
- Loud, rude, boastful, immature
- Hardworking
- Ignorant of other countries
- Generous
- Wealthy
- Always in a hurry

Depending on the country, many Americans may view others as:

- Meticulous and structured
- Private, suspicious of sharing information
- Authoritarian
- Religious zealots
- Warm and emotional
- Courteous and refined
- Always late

Specific barriers to understanding of other cultures include...

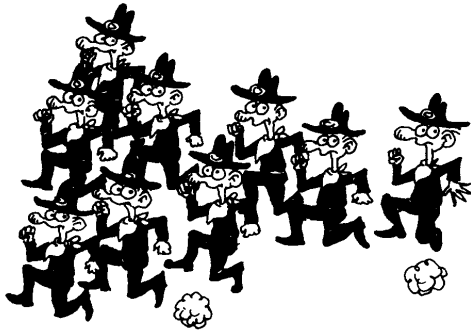
1. Ethnocentrism



Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding one's own culture as superior in all ways, can lead to unhealthy, proud attitudes, arrogant self-righteousness, and feelings of haughtiness which can destroy personal relationships.

2. Prejudice Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, inflexible generalizations, numbs our ability to understand others. Prejudice too readily violates objective standards of fairness, justice, and impartiality.

3. Stereotypes Rigid biases--applied to all peoples of a particular group--demean others.



Perceptions become immune to logic and experience. A stereotyped template skews all incoming information. Depersonalization and dehumanization result. Individuals become caricatured, distorted, and seen too often only in a negative light.

4. American Cultural Barriers Based upon his experiences as a state department official and former hostage during the Iranian crisis, Moorhead Kennedy identifies the following four cultural barriers Americans distinctly possess. These matters especially relate to ethnocentrism and stereotyping.

a. Self-assertiveness Being bullheaded, successful "winners" often inhibits our ability to listen to others. The insensitive military slogan, "when you've got them by the shorts, their hearts and minds are sure to follow" expresses this barrier.

b. Isolationist Too often we see things as we want to see them, overlooking or denying what is really present in another culture.

c. Moralistic Seeing matters with an arrogant, God-given-destiny approach leads to judgmental, critical, insensitive thinking. The tendency is to believe one's standards as superior to those of others, criticizing others on the basis of standards which may not be appropriate for their culture.

d. Religiosity This crusader instinct defines and advocates views concerning secular issues with an absolute religious certainty. Such definitions are more appropriate to the basic tenets of revealed religion. Religiosity goes contrary to the thoughts expressed by Abraham Lincoln, who advocated tolerance and self-criticism. President Lincoln pointed out that...

"the Confederates prayed to the same God as did the North. We must do the 'right,' but we can do that only to the 'limited extent that God gives us to see it.'" (Ayatollah in the Cathedral, pp. 192-202.)

5. Military Hindrances Sometimes the climate of our Armed Forces creates barriers to cultural understanding. Among these impediments are...



a. Force protection Based upon the legitimate need to protect our Armed Forces personnel in a hostile or ambiguous area of operations, some commands prohibit interaction with local populations and societal structures. They expend little effort to enable soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines to understand the cultures of the area of deployment. Time and resource constraints are part of this oversight. Also, a "less-soldiers-know-the-less-they'll-be-tempted-to-interact" reasoning plays into the equation.

b. Humanize the enemy In the difficult world of force on force conflict, some commanders reason that "humanizing the enemy--knowing about the culture, family structures, religion, education and fine arts of those against whom action is taken--creates too much internal conflict for American warriors. It's harder to pull the trigger against someone about whom you've developed a great deal of positive empathy.

c. Arrogance The old "when you've got them by the shorts, their hearts and minds will surely follow" adage still prevails in some circles. The emphasis is that if threatened with enough overwhelming power, most any people will surely acquiesce and give in. Cultural understanding becomes unnecessary.

6. Culture shock



This concept defines the confused feelings one experiences when confronted with a large number of new and unfamiliar people or situations.

Culture shock inhibits accurate understanding of others who are different. Most people undergo the disorientation and upset which comes when traveling to a new country or being placed in a new situation.

Think back to initial encounters with basic training or officer's basic courses. Many go through disorientation and distress. (Remember the first couple of weeks at the Presidio of Monterey?) Often this sense of frustration and bewilderment is compounded by a move to an overseas duty station. Thankfully, with the passage of time, most often these feelings leave.

Culture shock often follows a predictable pattern. Individuals enter a new setting with high energy and excitement levels.



After the initial euphoria, a letdown occurs. Resentment, discouragement, distress, frustration--even hostility and rebellion surface. For linguists and intelligence operatives, becoming entangled in this stage leads to negative, disparaging reactions.

Individuals lock themselves in the barracks with videos and drinks. Little sense of appreciation for host-nation culture and peoples occur. Only when a renewed stage of learning takes place--the acquiring of knowledge of a new society and people--can an atmosphere of acceptance and calm resurface.

Indications of the long-term effects of culture shock may surface due to a persons being too long, under too much pressure, in a country not his or her own.

Robert Kohls, in his book Survival Kit for Overseas Living, outlines an action plan for dealing with culture shock:

a. Gather information Before leaving for a new location, duty station, or overseas post/base, learn as much about that new setting as possible.



b. Analyze When hit with the letdown stage, look for logical reasons--describe, interpret, and evaluate what is happening to you.



c. Resist negativity If the temptation comes to disparage the new culture, fight the tendency to fall to negative jokes and comments. Remain positive.



d. Befriend a host-nation counterpart Talk over your own reactions and feelings with someone who has a sympathetic ear, who can help you understand the new setting.



e. Demonstrate confidence Realize that these feelings too shall pass. Focusing on the long-term, positive outcome outlasts emotional reactions often experienced in the present.



Vocabulary List: Cultural Awareness

Central/South Central Europe (SCE) Term identifying countries comprising the former Yugoslavia. It is a less fractious and emotion laden designation than "the Balkans" or "Eastern Europe." South East Europe (SEE) is another interchangeable, identifying term for this region.

Creative generalizations Concepts--tempered with care and refinement, always subject to modification and open to change--which enable us to make careful statements. When kept dynamic, flexible and tentative, this conceptual format enables us to make intelligible statements about others.

Cultural sensitivity Possession of attitudes and knowledge which enables one to be aware of and interact with differing ethnic, racial and national groups

Culture shock The disorientation and upset which often accompany traveling to a new country or situation. Emotions vary including euphoria, distress, resentment, hostility, rebellion, and negativity.

Culture That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feeling. Language, values, customary behaviors; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking; these attributes describe social characteristics of a people. The total way of life of a group--passed on from generation to generation

Ethnocentrism Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding your own culture as superior in all ways, which leads to unhealthy, proud attitudes, arrogant self-righteousness, and feelings of haughtiness which can destroy personal relationships

Monochronic time Having a tendency to do only one thing at a time. Describes the approach to time held by many Americans

Nations in transition Term applying to countries formerly under Soviet domination who are now emerging democracies. "Nations in transition" is a substitute term for the more negative, communist era designation of Eastern Europe.

Peace operations An umbrella term that encompasses the following types of activities--those that diplomatically lead (preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace building) and other complementary, (predominately military), peacekeeping and peace-enforcement activities

Perceptions Our mental grasp of others and their ideas of us

Polychronic time Tending to be involved in many things at once. Describes those who live in many non-European countries of the world

Prejudice Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, inflexible generalizations, which numb our ability to understand others. Prejudice too readily violates objective standards of fairness, justice and impartiality.

Proverbs Short, pithy saying commonplace in most every culture

Stereotypes Rigid biases applied to all peoples of a particular group--thus simplifying and demeaning others. Perceptions become immune to logic and experience. A stereotyped template skews all incoming information. Depersonalization and dehumanization result. Individuals become caricatured, distorted, and seen too often only in a negative light.

Review Quiz: Cultural Awareness



Part 1--Matching Place the correct letter in the blank provided. Not all of the lettered items may be used.

1. ____ Stereotypes
 2. ____ Polychronic time
 3. ____ Mafia
 4. ____ Slivovitsa
 5. ____ Networking
 6. ____ Prejudice
 7. ____ Creative generalization
 8. ____ Monochronic time
 9. ____ Peace operations
 10. ____ Culture shock
 11. ____ Ethnocentrism
 12. ____ Culture
- A. Concepts--tempered with care, refinement, always subject to modification and open to change--which enable us to make careful statements.
 - B. Possession of attitudes and knowledge which enables one to be aware of and interact with differing ethnic, racial and national groups.
 - C. The disorientation and upset which often accompany traveling to a new country or situation.
 - D. That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feelings. Language, values, customary behaviors; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking.
 - E. Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding your own culture as superior in all ways.
 - F. Term describing wide spectrum of nations in transition peoples--from gangsters to business people.
 - G. Having a tendency to do only one thing at a time.

- H. Fruit brandy of some south Slavs.
 - I. An umbrella term that encompasses many types of activities; those that diplomatically lead (preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace building) and two complementary, (predominately military), peacekeeping and peace-enforcement activities.
 - J. Our mental grasp of others and their ideas of us.
 - K. Tending to be involved in many things at once.
 - L. Rigid, negative attitudes based on faulty, preconceived, inflexible generalizations, which numb our ability to understand others.
 - M. Short, pithy sayings commonplace in most every culture.
 - N. Importance of developing a relationship or "connection" to procure goods and services.
 - O. Rigid biases applied to all peoples of a particular group--thus simplifying and demeaning others. Perceptions become immune to logic and experience.
-



Part 2--Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. _____ What statement best reflects why cultural awareness is important for military linguists?
 - a. When you have them by the shorts, hearts and minds will soon follow.
 - b. Such awareness promotes harmonious interaction with Allied counterparts.
 - c. Guns and butter get things done.

2. _____ For LTG Pagonis, chief allied logistician during Desert Shield/Storm/Farewell, what was the most important communication pattern he employed during the conflict?
 - a. Fingering worry beads.
 - b. Displaying self-control and calmness in all settings.
 - c. Spouting forth Persian Gulf gender issues.

3. _____ During Desert Storm/Shield/Farewell, General Schwarzkopf discovered that decision-making time with Saudi Arabian counterparts took _____ than that with other Americans.
 - a. excessively longer
 - b. much less time

4. _____ The diversity of American attitudes towards gun control, abortion, and dealing with the federal deficit demonstrates
 - a. that people like to spout off without thinking.
 - b. that Americans are a monolithic, homogeneous people.
 - c. the great variety within our country.

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5. ____ What is NOT a cultural awareness advantage possessed by military personnel?
- a. Diversity found within the nation and military
 - b. Acculturation of "noble values" occurring in basic training
 - c. Being perceived by non-Department of Defense as having the military mindset
6. ____ When developed correctly, creative generalizations most often are
- a. subject to modification and open to change.
 - b. sweeping statements leading to erroneous conclusions.
 - c. the basis for stereotyped, prejudiced notions about others.
7. ____ In many areas of the world, politics, economics, government, and religious beliefs are
- a. confined to separate, individualized compartments of society.
 - b. fused together, being intertwined throughout the culture.
8. ____ The American constitution respects
- a. the division between church and state.
 - b. church/state fusion.
9. ____ Seeing other people's way of life only through one's own "glasses," regarding one's own culture as superior, best describes
- a. ethnocentrism.
 - b. religiosity.
 - c. culture shock.
10. ____ The nineteen countries making up the nations in transition, possess over 200 million people (three-fourths of the U.S. populations), while living in a land area _____ the size of the U.S.
- a. twice
 - b. three-quarters
 - c. one-quarter
-

Part 3--Identification U.S. or nations in transition personnel traditionally possess the following proverbs and values. Place 'US' in front of those held by many Americans; and 'SCE' before those held by many Central/South Central European peoples.



1. _____ A stitch in time saves nine.
2. _____ Who bargains much is the real buyer.
3. _____ Know a little, talk a lot.
4. _____ The fish grows rotten from the head.
5. _____ God helps those who help themselves.
6. _____ No one is perfect.
7. _____ An honest man does not break his word.
8. _____ If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.
9. _____ Thieves increase with the making of new laws.
10. _____ Good coffee should be [strong] like the devil, hot like hell, and sweet as a kiss.
11. _____ Change, progress and trust in the future.
12. _____ Individualism and privacy.
13. _____ Thieves nowadays are not in the forests but in the offices.
14. _____ As long as language lives, the nation is not dead.
15. _____ Open, direct, assertive ways of communicating.
16. _____ Informality in speech, dress and approach to life.

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17. _____ Poor in goods, rich in joys.
18. _____ Truncated, fast, efficient and organized use of time.
19. _____ To live nicely.
20. _____ Enough is better than much.

Part 4--Selection Place an M (Monochronic [American/European] People) or a P (Polychronic [non-American/European] People) before the trait which tends to describe many monochronic or polychronic peoples.



1. _____ Borrow and lend things often and easily.
2. _____ Emphasize promptness.
3. _____ Change plans often and easily.
4. _____ Do many things at once.
5. _____ Highly distractible and subject to interruptions.
6. _____ Concentrate on the job at hand.
7. _____ Strictly adhere to plans set.
8. _____ Seldom borrow or lend.
9. _____ Do one thing at a time.
10. _____ Take deadlines and schedules seriously.



Part 5--True or False Place a T or
an F in the blank provided.

1. _____ Recent peace operations and combined UN/multinational missions demonstrate the importance of awareness of cultural factors by military personnel.
2. _____ Successful intelligence collection includes religious beliefs, political loyalties, and ethnic backgrounds of regions analyzed.
3. _____ Assessing the determination of a resistance group to persevere can be a part of the intelligence mission.
4. _____ The U.S. military is the largest, most diverse organization in our nation.
5. _____ Concerning time perceptions, Americans tend to be polychronic people.
6. _____ Creative generalizations foster rigid, bullheaded opinions and attitudes.
7. _____ Cultures and peoples are multilayered, complex entities.
8. _____ It is difficult to make broad, accurate, conclusive statements about others.
9. _____ Demonstrating civility and respect promotes understanding between groups of people.
10. _____ In many cultures of the world, religion is an increasingly important force for political/societal renewal.
11. _____ The glut of information available (books, Internet contacts, newspapers, news broadcasts), if mishandled, can create barriers to cultural understanding.

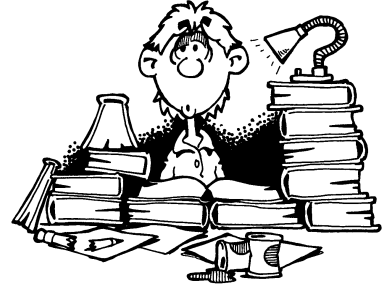
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12. _____ Personal "spiritual blinders" may inhibit accurate appraisal of other religious/cultural systems.
13. _____ Arrogant self-righteousness and haughty feelings can destroy relationships and make barriers to understanding.
14. _____ Self-assertiveness often enhances our ability to listen to others.
15. _____ Demonstrating confidence, realizing lousy feelings often pass, and focusing on the long term can help one deal with culture shock.



"Let Off Some Steam!"

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"You've got to go from where you are. You've got to do the best with what you have." (General Edward C. Meyer)

