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Sociocultural Systems:
The Next Step in Army Cultural Capability

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Current Army cultural training is useful and necessary, but significant focus is on how one individual interacts at an interpersonal level with another individual or group of individuals. However, our notion of cross-cultural effectiveness in military operations is incomplete if it does not include the concept of *sociocultural systems.* Discussions about how to improve the Army's cultural capability for future operations must include a discussion of sociocultural systems and how the Army can evaluate them, influence them, and operate effectively within them. This research product is an anthology of chapters written by some of the best and brightest in academia and government on a host of topics relevant to sociocultural systems and the operational environment. The anthology reflects an interdisciplinary perspective with contributors who represent a variety of professional domains, including (but not limited to) political science, communications, psychology, anthropology, intelligence, sociology, and the geosciences. The anthology contains 17 chapters addressing diverse topic areas, including humanitarian assistance, heritage, cultural narratives, female engagements, internally displaced populations, clans, property, and water. Chapters also address a number of countries other than Afghanistan and Iraq (e.g., Somalia, Mali).

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SOCIOCULTURAL SYSTEMS: THE NEXT STEP IN ARMY CULTURAL CAPABILITY

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Preface

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A counterinsurgency campaign is ... a mix of offensive, defensive, and stability operations conducted along multiple lines of operations. It requires Soldiers and Marines to employ a mix of familiar combat tasks and skills more often associated with nonmilitary agencies. The balance between them depends on the local situation. Achieving this balance is not easy. It requires leaders at all levels to adjust their approach constantly. They must ensure that their Soldiers and Marines are ready to be greeted with either a handshake or a hand grenade while taking on missions only infrequently practiced until recently at our combat training centers. Soldiers and Marines are expected to be nation builders as well as warriors. They must be prepared to help reestablish institutions and local security forces and assist in rebuilding infrastructure and basic services. They must be able to facilitate establishing local governance and the rule of law. The list of such tasks is long; performing them involves extensive coordination and cooperation with many intergovernmental, host-nation, and international agencies. Indeed, the responsibilities of leaders in a counterinsurgency campaign are daunting.... Conducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign requires a flexible, adaptive force led by agile, well-informed, culturally astute leaders.

LTG David H. Petraeus (U.S. Army) and LtGen James F. Amos (USMC)
Foreword to *FM 3-24: Counterinsurgency* (2006)

Since 9/11, the United States Army has become increasingly aware of the importance of cross-cultural competence during military operations, resulting in significant gains in promoting cultural knowledge and skills training. Military personnel often partner with host nationals, non-governmental organizations, and Coalition Forces as part of helping countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan build self-sustaining government, military, and police organizations. Army personnel require a diverse and sophisticated skill set to be effective, and Soldiers often must be interpersonally and culturally competent. Consequently, the traditional military paradigm of training Soldiers to fight conventional wars has given way to new thinking about methods to best promote security at home and abroad. Over the years, the Army has steadily improved its cultural training in an effort to address diverse operations ranging from kinetic warfare to governance to security force assistance to humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

The growing desire to understand how to make Soldiers and leaders more effective in cross-cultural contexts gained momentum around 2006. First, 2006 marked the publication of the Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual, which placed heavy emphasis on cultural awareness and working with and around host nation populations (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). Second, the U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) asked the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) to conduct a study on how to increase linguistic and cultural capability in the Army. Ultimately, the findings from this study, known as the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency (CULP) study, served to shape

not only the Army's understanding of cross-cultural effectiveness, but understanding within the Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, and Department of Defense.

The results of the CULP study are published in a report only 24 pages long (Abbe, 2008). Despite its brevity, the report has served as reference material for high-level government documents regarding cultural training, including a report for the U.S. House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations entitled "Building Language Skills and Cultural Competencies in the Military: Bridging the Gap" (Committee on Armed Services, 2010). A second report from the CULP study (Abbe, Gulick, & Herman, 2007) is cited frequently by researchers and military personnel and is somewhat longer (54 pages), but could still be considered brief given the vastness of the topic area. The findings of these two reports have played a pivotal role in defining cross-cultural competence for the current Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy (2009), as well as in identifying factors that influence effectiveness when working with individuals from other cultures.

The first and enduring contribution of the CULP study was to differentiate among three distinct, but overlapping competencies that contribute to cultural capability. Specifically, Abbe (2008) identified language proficiency, region-specific knowledge, and cross-cultural competence as playing unique roles in cultural capability. Today, the model (Figure 1) that appeared in Abbe's 2008 report is included in numerous government publications, including the Air Force's culture and language strategy (U.S. Air Force, 2009). The model has successfully promoted a more coherent discussion within and across the military services about the merits and components of each competency, such as the degree to which language training is needed and how to create language capability across an organization, the extent to which regional expertise is required for general purpose forces, and methods for providing all military personnel with "culture-general skills."
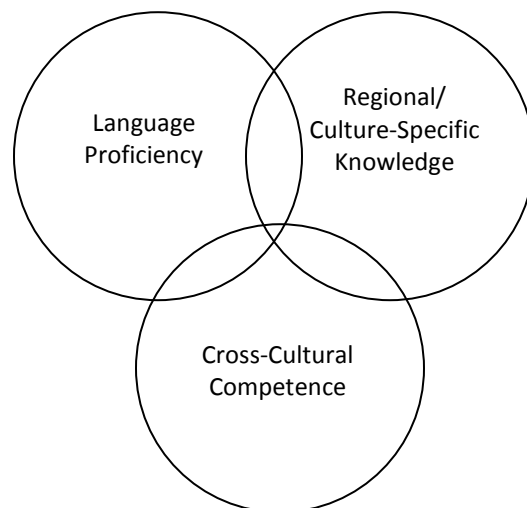

Figure 1. **Components of cross-cultural capability as depicted in Abbe (2008).**

A second contribution of the CULP study was the emphasis placed on *culture-general* knowledge*, skills, and attitudes (Abbe, 2008; Abbe et al., 2007). A culture-general approach is "an approach that emphasizes common aspects and domains of the culture concept, providing individuals with knowledge (concepts, theories, processes, etc.), skills, and attitudes that offer broadly-applicable general principles and serve as a framework for culture-specific learning" (U.S. Air Force, 2009, pg. 19). The appeal of a culture-general approach is that it assumes, regardless of the culture to which military personnel are deploying, military personnel can improve their cross-cultural performance by becoming stronger in a core set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) valid across cultures. This constellation of KSAs is referred to as *cross-cultural competence* (Abbe et al., 2007) or *3C* (U.S. Air Force, 2009).

An important implication of the culture-general approach is that the military can develop cross-cultural competent personnel without needing to forecast accurately the countries to which a Soldier will be sent or the specific types of missions that will be conducted. Instead, providing each Soldier with a foundation of culture-general KSAs will help the Soldier adapt more quickly to new cultural contexts, learn region-specific information about a new culture more readily, and generally enhance that Soldier's performance in any cultural context. Examples of culture-general KSAs include social perspective taking, a variety of interpersonal skills, mental flexibility, and self-regulation (Abbe et al., 2007), but the definitive list of KSAs comprising cross-cultural competence is an ongoing question for researchers and practitioners alike. Additionally, the relationship between cross-cultural competence and cross-cultural performance is not fully understood, although empirical evidence suggests many identified components of cross-cultural competence are essential to cross-cultural effectiveness (e.g., Ramsden Zbylut, Metcalf, & Brunner, 2011; Ramsden Zbylut, Metcalf, McGowan, Beemer, Brunner, & Vowels, 2009).

In sum, the past five years have resulted in increasing recognition of the importance of cross-cultural competence and the identification of factors that might impact cross-cultural effectiveness. Emphasis on cross-cultural competence and culture-general KSAs have been particularly useful in developing training for personnel who engage in interpersonal interactions with members of another culture—e.g., combat advisors, human terrain teams, and female engagement teams. For instance, military advisor pre-deployment training typically provides Soldiers with some form of culture and language training (Committee on Armed Services, 2007).

Micro to Macro Perspectives: Advancing the Understanding of Cross-cultural Effectiveness

While current Army cultural training is useful and necessary, it primarily addresses how one individual interacts at an interpersonal level with another individual or group of individuals. At strategic levels of leadership, military personnel must also be able to formulate an understanding of the sociocultural dynamics of the environment in which they are working. Additionally, even military personnel not considered to be "strategic leaders" can find themselves in situations that require understanding the larger sociocultural picture. For example, many have noted the importance of the "strategic corporal" in creating large-scale effects in cross-cultural situations (e.g., Stringer, 2009). Therefore, it appears important for Army

instruction to go beyond interpersonal skills and cultural awareness training to address how military personnel can examine cultures and societies from a macro-level systems perspective. A macro-level perspective becomes important in enabling military personnel to better understand the operational environment and effect change in order to benefit members of the host nation, as well as promote U.S. national security interests. A macro-level perspective is especially important for military personnel engaged in stability, security, and reconstruction operations. To be effective, military personnel will often be required to identify, analyze, and make determinations about how to deal with multiple groups of individuals and interests in the operational environment. Each group may have its own agenda, needs, resources, culture, problems, and goals. Moreover, the types of groups found in many operational environments form an extensive list, including host nationals, internally displaced populations, different ethnic groups, insurgents, Coalition Forces, non-governmental organizations, and media groups.

Thus, despite noteworthy gains made by the military's emphasis on cross-cultural competence, our notion of cross-cultural effectiveness in military operations is incomplete if it does not include the concept of *sociocultural systems.* For example, LtCol Reinhart (2010) noted, "At the operational level, inter-personal skills are important, but the number of service members required to interact with host nation personnel will be restricted to the senior leadership. At this level, attributes associated with analytical skills and extensive knowledge of and personal experience in the operational environment will be in high demand. Due to the complexity of cultural issues at the operational level of war, this knowledge and experience is required to discern meaningful themes and key players in the theater of operation" (pg. 17). It appears that, while it is important for military personnel to maintain cross-cultural skills that enable effective interpersonal interactions, it is also important to develop cross-cultural skills and knowledge that allow for a strategic view of the sociocultural landscape. Consequently, discussions about how to improve the Army's cultural capability for future operations must include a discussion of sociocultural systems and how the Army can evaluate them, influence them, and operate effectively within them. The anthology contained within the pages of this book begins that discussion.

At this point, the reader might ask, "What is a sociocultural system?" Webster's Dictionary defines *sociocultural* as "being both social and cultural" (Soukhanov et al., 1988, pg. 1103), but this definition is neither informative nor practical, having failed to define the key characteristics comprising a sociocultural system. However, Webster's definition does imply something of great importance not immediately apparent to the intelligent lay person interested in culture. That is, the society within a country is not the same thing as the culture or cultures within that country; culture and society are related, but different, concepts (Corman, Chapter 6; U.S. Department of the Army, 2009).

As Steven Corman aptly notes in Chapter 6, the term *sociocultural system* "is often applied loosely" (pg. 68). As a result, the reader will observe the chapters in this anthology provide many definitions of a sociocultural system. Each definition has merit and validity depending on the topic or problem area being addressed. The reader of this anthology is encouraged to explore the assorted viewpoints about sociocultural systems and select the pieces of pragmatic value to him or her. However, for the reader who quickly wants to understand the

concept of a sociocultural system, the reader is referred to Jamshid Gharajedaghi's (Chapter 1) and Steven Corman's (Chapter 6) chapters because these two chapters present coherent, but different stances on sociocultural systems. Readers also may note the following recurrent themes about sociocultural systems across the chapters:

1. Sociocultural systems are complex, consisting of multiple factors that interact to create effects greater than the sum of the parts.

2. Sociocultural systems are adaptive, evolving, and fluid. The boundaries of where the system begins and ends are ill-defined and permeable.

3. Sociocultural systems emerge from relationships among individuals and groups of individuals, as well as the implicit and explicit processes that shape the social order.

4. Sociocultural systems create shared experiences among individuals and groups of individuals through narratives, history, communication, rituals, heritage, and other facets of culture.

5. Sociocultural systems, while a macro-level concept, have ties to the individual. Sociocultural systems can be influenced by the thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, and decisions of individuals, but the thoughts attitudes, behaviors, and decisions of individuals are also influenced by facets of the sociocultural system.

In reality, the idea of sociocultural systems is hardly radical to the Army, although the term itself has not woven itself fully into the fabric of the military lexicon for General Purpose Forces. For example, the Counterinsurgency (COIN) Field Manual (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006) discusses the importance of understanding both culture and society, and indicates Soldiers should consider six sociocultural factors when evaluating a population: society, social structures, culture, language, power and authority, and interests. Military personnel also are familiar with acronyms like ASCOPE and PMESII, which represent sociocultural concepts even if not always labeled as such. For instance, Army doctrine indicates military personnel should consider areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events (i.e., ASCOPE) when planning civil operations (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). Army doctrine also suggests commanders incorporate political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information (i.e., PMESII) factors into strategic thinking and planning (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008b).

Thus, the notion of sociocultural systems is a seed already planted in the minds of many military personnel. And yet, the discussion on how to improve cultural training in the military focuses more on cross-cultural KSAs pertinent to relationship building and less on cross-cultural KSAs related to understanding the broader operational picture (Reinhart, 2010). This may be due, in part, to the nature of recent military missions, which involved helping Iraq and Afghanistan create self-sustaining governments and professional military and police organizations. Such missions required extensive interpersonal interactions and relationship building activities (Ramsden Zbylut et al., 2009; Ramsden Zbylut et al., 2011). The need to develop training to enable military personnel to engage effectively with host nationals was immediate and pronounced.

It is time, though, to look beyond Iraq and Afghanistan and prepare for future and unforeseen missions anywhere in the world—each country unique, each challenge different. While we cannot predict the future, this much we know: military personnel operate in places of turmoil. The military must continue to be prepared for war, but also for missions as diverse as disaster relief, stability operations, and humanitarian crises. Most of these missions will occur within a sociocultural system that has been disrupted in one way or another. Understanding systems will be key to effective action within that system and to move a region toward stability. Ultimately, the Army will be more culturally capable to the extent it can develop Soldiers and leaders who not only interact effectively on the interpersonal level, but can comprehend and plan at the macro-level. In sum, cross-cultural competence may require the need for *systems thinking* and the ability for military personnel to visualize the operational environment with respect to its sociocultural characteristics and processes. Senge (1990) described systems thinking as:

> … a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots." It is a set of general principles—distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management. It is also a set of specific tools and techniques, originating in two threads: in "feedback" concepts of cybernetics and in "servo-mechanism" engineering theory dating back to the nineteenth century. During the last thirty years, these tools have been applied to understand a wide range of corporate, urban, regional, economic, political, ecological, and even physiological systems. And systems thinking is a sensibility—for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character. (pp. 68-69)

Creating the cultural capability within the Army to think in terms of sociocultural systems requires an interdisciplinary perspective, as no one professional discipline can supply all the answers. The complex world of today presents challenges that require the expertise of political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, the intelligence community, psychologists, ethicists, systems theorists, military strategists, and many other professional domains. Adequate understanding of how to assist military personnel in systems thinking with respect to sociocultural factors requires understanding both those who think (i.e., Soldiers) and the problem space itself (i.e., sociocultural systems). This anthology will present multi-disciplinary perspectives about how the military might define the problem space, as well as provide insights about cognitive factors that influence how military personnel think about the problem space. While this anthology will not provide answers on how to develop or select Soldiers who can successfully navigate a sociocultural landscape, this anthology will present multiple ways of thinking about the sociocultural landscape from some of the best and brightest experts in academia and the government. Moreover, for military readers, this anthology is intended to expand thinking about different approaches to understanding sociocultural systems and cast light on different facets of sociocultural systems relevant to the operational environment. Additionally, several chapters focus on regions other than Afghanistan and Iraq, such as Mali, Somalia, and Iran (e.g., Glenzer, Chapter 17; Iqbal, Chapter 16; Moaddel, Chapter 7).

The Chapters in This Anthology[1]

The first chapter, by Jamshid Gharajedaghi, provides an overview of sociocultural systems and describes important properties of sociocultural systems. To Gharajedaghi, a sociocultural system is "a set of elements linked almost entirely by interconnection of information. It is an organization of meanings emerging from a network of interactions among individuals" (pg. 6). His viewpoint provides an intriguing way of understanding sociocultural systems, which is very different from, although compatible with, military sociocultural concepts such as PMESII and ASCOPE. Within Army Doctrine (e.g., U.S. Department of the Army, 2006, 2008b), ASCOPE and PMESII identify sociocultural elements military personnel should examine to understand the operational environment (e.g., infrastructure, people, political institutions, economy). However, PMESII and ASCOPE are less successful at providing an adequate framework for describing how sociocultural elements interact with one another to create a dynamic and fluid system. Consequently, using PMESII and ASCOPE to understand a sociocultural system is much like trying to understand and describe water by stating that water consists of two hydrogen molecules and one oxygen molecule. Describing water as H_2O is technically correct, but hardly descriptive of the rich meanings, purposes, or physical characteristics of water.

Unlike PMESII and ASCOPE, which identify elements of a sociocultural system, Gharajedaghi's chapter identifies behaviors of the sociocultural system. To Gharajedaghi, if one wants to understand a sociocultural system, one must understand that the system is comprised of the following properties: openness, purposefulness, multidimensionality, emergent property, and counterintuitive behavior. That is, sociocultural systems have permeable and ill-defined boundaries, result from a series of choices and events interacting throughout the system, consist of tensions and oppositions that interplay to create phenomena greater than the sum of the parts, and sometimes result in unexpected and counterintuitive outcomes. Thus, while PMESII and ASCOPE describe the *elements* of a sociocultural system, Gharajedaghi describes the *behavior* of a sociocultural system, much like water can be defined in terms of its molecular structure, movement, and other qualities.

Following Gharajedaghi's chapter on sociocultural systems is Michael Smith's chapter, "Ethical Dilemmas of Encountering Other Cultures: An Introduction" (Chapter 2). Smith's chapter provides an evocative addition to the military's ongoing discussion on ethical behavior and decision making. Smith makes a compelling case for a strategic-level view of ethics, which requires not only thinking about how actions impact the sociocultural system as a whole, but a realistic assessment of whether a plan is achievable before implementing it. Smith specifically references segments of the COIN Field Manual (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006) in relation to ethical considerations when intervening in other cultures. Many of the considerations raised in

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[1] Note that chapters can be read independent of one another. While the editors arranged the chapters in an order that made sense to them, there are alternative ways to present the chapters. Readers are encouraged to read the chapters in whatever order they choose. Additionally, reading chapters in different orders may allow the reader to see different themes, so readers are encouraged to read chapters in a different order each time they read the anthology.

Smith's chapter have relevance to the topics discussed in subsequent chapters, which is the rationale for presenting the chapter on ethics early in the anthology.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 explore the interface between the individual and culture. Ken Cushner's chapter, "The Role of Cross-Cultural Differences in Understanding Systems Thinking," provides a coherent discussion of ways in which culture influences how individuals perceive and experience the world. His chapter has implications for understanding the impact of culture on how military personnel process information, as well as for how individuals from other cultures perceive the actions of U.S. military personnel. Chapter 4, by Catherine Tinsley and Anna Mayo, continues Cushner's discussion on information processing with an emphasis on how cognitive biases can impede military personnel from gaining an accurate understanding of a sociocultural system. Tinsley and Mayo explicitly note problems with confirmation bias and fundamental attribution error, which are also challenges in cross-cultural perspective taking (Roan, Strong, Foss, Yager, Gehlbach, & Metcalf, 2009). While Chapters 3 and 4 focus primarily on the cognitions of individuals, Chapter 5 focuses on the communication between individuals. Allison Greene-Sands discusses the importance of nonverbal communication for operating within a sociocultural system. She provides a useful overview of nonverbal behavior across cultures and discusses individual knowledge, skills, and abilities that may impact effective nonverbal communication.

In Chapter 6, the chapters in the anthology begin to broaden their focus beyond the individual actor to explore several macro-level concepts inherent in sociocultural systems. In many respects, Steven Corman's chapter, "Understanding Sociocultural Systems through a Narrative Lens," is also a chapter about communication (Chapter 6), but at the cultural rather than interpersonal level. Corman's chapter illustrates the power of stories in a culture to create a common understanding of events and to reinforce the values of a society. Corman's chapter concludes with suggestions on how to use narratives to understand a culture. Mansoor Moaddel's chapter, "Cultural Change as Issues Resolution: Predicting Change in the Middle East" (Chapter 7), also touches upon the issue of communication and social discourse at the cultural level. Unlike Corman's chapter, however, which largely focuses on using narrative to understand a culture, Moaddel addresses the issue of culture change across the Middle East. Importantly, Moaddel looks beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, discussing countries like Iran, India, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

Chapter 8 presents a unique way for the military to think about power dynamics within a sociocultural system. Specifically, Chapter 8 invites military leaders and analysts to identify *what is missing* as opposed to *what is present* in aspects of the system. Steffany Trofino's chapter, "The Reverse Assessment of Asymmetric Warfare," suggests the military can gain a foothold for leverage in a sociocultural system by understanding what insurgents are *incapable* of doing and then exploiting that vulnerability. She discusses issues ranging from power vacuums to providing social welfare. Trofino's chapter also demonstrates the permeability of the boundaries of a sociocultural system, which may be composed of not only the local population, but also foreign entities seeking to influence the political system. Although not the intent of her chapter, Trofino's chapter raises intriguing possibilities about where the boundaries of a sociocultural system should be drawn. For instance, should military planners and analysts define

a sociocultural system as consisting of all the elements in-country (e.g., political institutions, military organizations, economics, etc.), or is there also value in considering influences that exist outside the country's borders (e.g., foreign governments, corporations)?

While Trofino's chapter invites the reader to consider how sociocultural systems are dynamic, fluid, and changing, Robert Sands' chapter reminds the reader that many elements of culture are rooted in tradition and heritage (Chapter 9). His chapter, "Reading Cultural Heritage: What Can Heritage Tell Us about the Behavior of the Cultural 'Other'?" provides military leaders with another tool to understand a culture. His chapter serves as a useful companion to Corman's chapter on narrative, particularly for readers interested in methods that can be used to understand a culture.

Chapters 10, 11, and 12 focus on topics we would traditionally think of as physical resources: property, land, and water. Geoffrey Demarest's chapter, "Culture of the Social Contract, Understood as Property," illustrates how meaningful information about a culture and society are embedded in the concept of *property* (Chapter 10). Douglas Batson provides additional insight regarding land and its relationship to people in his chapter, "Government, Governance, and Land: Positively Compounding Complex Operations" (Chapter). Chapter 12, Aaron Wolf's chapter entitled "International Waters: Conflict, Cooperation, and Transformation," moves the discussion of resources from land to water. Wolf's chapter is acutely thought-provoking because it contradicts conventional wisdom that water scarcity automatically results in conflict. Indeed, according to Wolf, water provides significant opportunities for collaboration and dialogue. All three chapters underscore that the physical resources of land and water have human, cultural, and social meanings beyond the physical characteristics of the resource itself, and these additional layers of meaning have considerable implications for effective military operations. Thus, the roles of both land and water in understanding a sociocultural system are substantially more complex than currently described in Army Doctrine (e.g., the COIN Field Manual, U.S. Department of the Army, 2006).

M. Nazif Shahrani's chapter, "Approaching Study of Political Culture in Afghanistan with Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Frameworks," provides an insightful perspective on how to examine the "Political" in PMESII (Chapter 13). Readers concerned with the topics of governance, partnership, and advising may find this chapter on political culture of great interest. Beyond the topic of governance and political systems, however, an important contribution of Shahrani's chapter is a framework that can be applied to make complex systems more comprehensible. In this respect, all readers may find value in his chapter regardless of their interest about political culture in Afghanistan.

While Shahrani's chapter targets part of the "P" in PMESII, Chapters 14, 15, and 16 address part of the "P" in ASCOPE—specifically, people. Chapters 14, 15, and 16 explore issues pertaining to three groups commonly found in the toughest operational environments: displaced populations, females, and clans. Chapter 14, written by Peter Van Arsdale, addresses multiple issues relevant to stability operations conducted in the proximity of displaced populations. Because Van Arsdale's chapter provides concrete guidance on working with displaced populations, military readers will likely find this chapter a nice complement to sections of Army

Doctrine regarding dislocated civilians and internally displaced populations (e.g., U.S. Department of the Army, 2006, 2008a). Lisa Brooks' chapter, "Gender Considerations for Engagements in Afghanistan and Beyond," also provides a useful complement to Army Doctrine in her detailed discussion of engaging female populations in the operational environment (Chapter 15). In her chapter, Brooks demonstrates the criticality of interpersonal engagements with female host nationals to gain information and acceptance at the local and tactical levels. More importantly, Brooks makes clear that strategically addressing issues of the female population at a more macro-level (e.g., national) is essential to promoting stability in a region. Finally, Zahreen Iqbal's chapter, "Assessing Traditional Somali Clan Culture in the Context of Al Shabaab and Foreign Military Intervention," provides an intelligent examination of clan culture in Somalia and the relationship between facets of a sociocultural system and extremism (Chapter 16).

Like Iqbal's chapter, Kent Glenzer's chapter focuses on Africa, with a specific focus on Mali (Chapter 17). "Chutes, Ladders, and Social Tectonics: A Dilettante's Framework for Understanding Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa" has applicability well beyond Mali and Africa, however. While Glenzer's discussion of social change in Mali is fascinating on its own merits, his chapter brings together many of the recurrent issues addressed in the anthology, including resources, power, structure, institutions, narrative, and traditions. Moreover, Glenzer provides a series of helpful questions the reader can use to gain a better understanding of a sociocultural system. Military readers may find Glenzer's questions and framework beneficial in analyzing the operational environment to gain additional information beyond what is currently offered in the PMESII and ASCOPE frameworks. For instance, Glenzer notes that it is important to identify who is challenging the dominant authority in a sociocultural system and what parts are being challenged, but it is equally important to ask, "Why aren't *other* aspects of the dominant [authority] being challenged?" (p. 247).

Last, Beret E. Strong integrates this diverse set of chapters in her conclusion of the anthology, pulling together overarching themes for the reader. She discusses multiple perspectives for defining and exploring the concept of sociocultural systems, helping the reader to detect nuanced differences emerging across the chapters. Strong also tackles the issue of change, consolidating across the chapters a number of methods and suggestions for influencing sociocultural systems. While the anthology does not provide definitive answers on how to generate social change, many of the chapters provide indications of how military leaders can create positive and sustainable effects in a sociocultural system. Strong concludes with directions for future research and next steps in understanding the role of sociocultural systems in operational environments.

As indicated previously, this anthology is intended to begin an earnest conversation in the Army about sociocultural systems and the need for military personnel to develop a cross-cultural systems-level understanding of the operational environment. Ultimately, if this anthology does its job properly, it will raise more questions than it answers and will expand thinking rather than provide definitive solutions. The complexity of the topic area invites that—creativity, innovation, curiosity, debate, and endless examination. The complexity of the operational environment demands it.

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Chapter 1

Sociocultural Systems

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During the last 50 years, our worldview has gone through a profound transformation in two critical dimensions. There has been a shift in our way of knowing from *analytical thinking,* the science of dealing with *independent* sets of variables, to *systems thinking,* the art, and science of handling *interdependent* set of variables. There has also been a fundamental shift in our understanding of the nature of social systems from a mindless *mechanical* system to a purposeful *sociocultural* system. Unfortunately, despite all of the rhetoric to the contrary, our newfound insights have had little influence on our choices. A dominant analytical culture, with a scientific tag, has kept reproducing the same set of non-solutions all over again. Effective use of these discriminating conceptions requires both a clear understanding of the operating principles of sociocultural systems and unambiguous recognition of the emerging challenge of handling interdependent variables. This paper will try only to shed some light on the latter of the two dimensions, *the nature and the behavior of sociocultural systems.*

To think about anything requires an image or a concept of it. To think about something as complex as an organization, we have used models of something similar and more familiar. The following three models represent the successive shift in our understanding of the nature of the social system, from a mindless mechanical tool, to a uni-minded biological being and, finally, to a multi-minded sociocultural system.

The mechanistic view of the world that evolved after the Renaissance maintains that the universe is a machine that works with a regularity dictated by its internal structure and the causal laws of nature (Ackoff, 1999). This worldview provided the basis not only for the Industrial Revolution but also for the development of the machine mode of organization. In the early stages of industrialization, machines replaced agricultural workers by the thousands. The reservoir of unemployable unskilled agricultural workers threatened the fabric of Western societies. Then came a miracle, an ingenious notion of organizations. It was argued that in the same way a complicated tractor is built by assembling parts, each performing only a simple task of horizontal, vertical, and circular motions, an organization could be created in such a manner that each person performs only a simple task. The mechanistic mode of organization was born

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as a logical extension of this conception and became instrumental in converting the army of unskilled agricultural laborers to semi-skilled industrial workers. The impact of this simple notion of organizations was so great that in one generation it created a capacity for the production of goods and services that surpassed the cumulative capacity of mankind up to then. The essence of the machine mode of organization is simple and elegant: an organization is a mindless system with no purpose of its own. It is a tool with a function defined by the user. The important attribute of this tool is its reliability, and its performance criterion is simply efficiency. The effectiveness of this mode of organization in producing goods and services created not just a quantitative change but also a qualitative change in the nature of the problem itself. Success changed the competitive game from an ability to produce to an ability to sell. The biological mode of thinking emerged to meet the challenge of managing growth and diversity.

Biological View

The underlying assumptions and principles of the biological mode of organizations are also simple and elegant: an organization is considered to be a uni-minded living system, just like a human being, with a purpose of its own. This purpose, in view of the inherent vulnerability and unstable structure of open systems (as defined below), is survival. To survive, according to conventional wisdom, biological beings have to grow by exploiting their environment. The growth then becomes the single most important performance criterion, and the sole measure of success. Although uni-minded systems have a choice, their parts do not. Parts operate on cybernetics principles as a homeostatic system, reacting to information in the same way as a thermostat (Beer, 1967). As a matter of fact, the beauty of a uni-minded system is that its parts do not have a choice and react only in a predefined manner to the events in its environment. For example, my heart cannot decide on its own that it doesn't want to work for me. My stomach will not get suspicious, thinking, "The liver is out to get me." No consciousness, no choice, no conflict. It is assumed that a malfunctioning of any normal uni-minded system is due to a lack of information or to noise in the communication channel. Therefore, the perceived remedy to most problems in this system has been more information and better communication. However, if parts of a uni-minded system develop consciousness and display choice, the system will be in real trouble. Imagine for a moment that the thermostat in your room suddenly develops a mind of its own—when it receives information about the temperature in the room, it decides it doesn't like it and wants to sleep on it.

Sociocultural View

The sociocultural view, the focus of this paper, considers a social system to be a voluntary association of purposeful members who have a choice. They get together to serve their own purpose by collectively serving a need in their environment. This is a whole new ball game. Mechanical or biological models cannot explain behavior of a system whose parts display an ability to choose. Therefore, a social system has to be understood on its own terms. Understanding the following five principles is the key to appreciating the distinctive characteristic of a sociocultural system. However, to get a handle on sociocultural systems, we also need to explore the essence of information-bonded systems and explain the self-organizing behavior of multi-minded purposeful systems. In addition, in this paper, I will touch upon social

learning and development and share my take on ideological terrorism as a major obstruction to the development of peaceful international order.

Systems Principles

The five principles of openness, purposefulness, multidimensionality, emergent property, and counterintuitive behavior, acting together as an interactive whole, define the essential characteristics of a sociocultural system (Figure 1). These five principles are an integral part of the systems view of organization from defining problems to designing solutions.
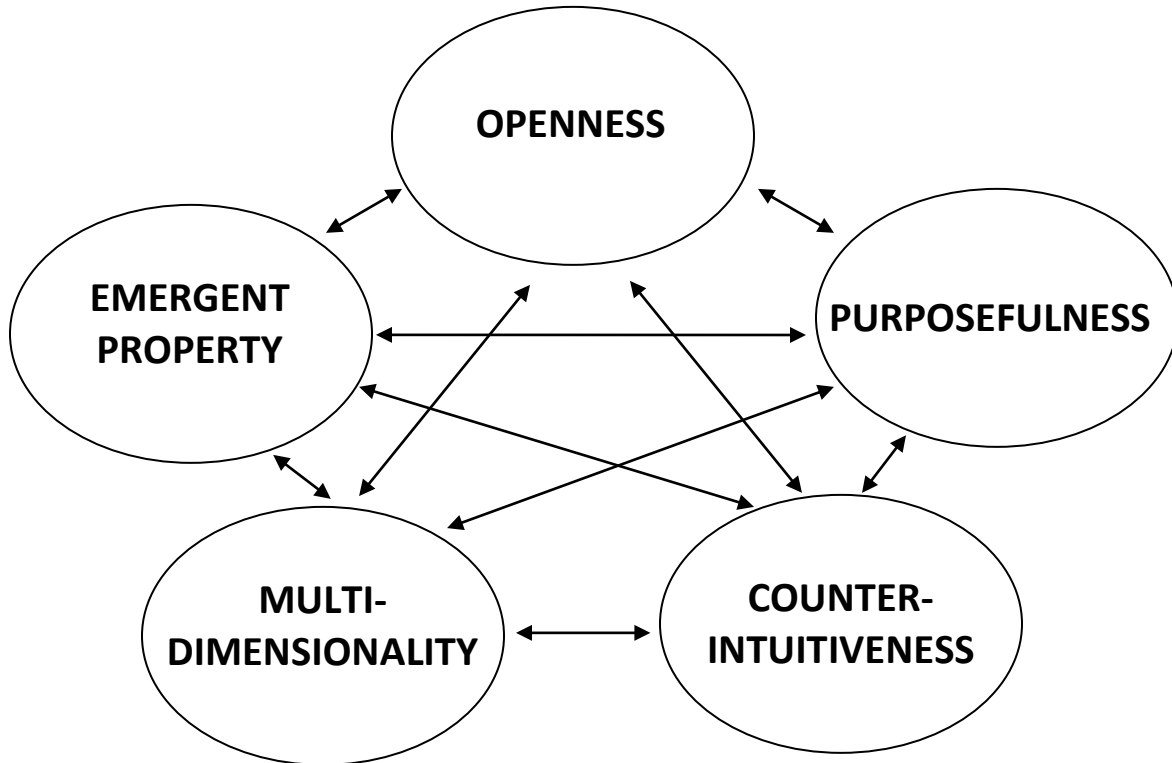
Figure 1. **Systems principles, showing the five dimensions of a sociocultural system.**

Openness

The recognition that in open systems everything depends on everything else provides a critical insight into the behavior of sociocultural systems. Grouping this "everything" into two categories—those elements that can be controlled and those that cannot—gives us an operational definition of the system, its environment, and the system's boundary. The *system* consists of all of the variables that can be controlled by the participating actor/actors. Meanwhile, the *environment* consists of all those variables that, although affecting the system's behavior, cannot be controlled by it. The system *boundary* thus becomes an arbitrary, subjective construct defined by the interest and the level of the ability and/or authority of the participating actors. For

example, the boundary between individuality and collectivity—the question of how much of me is me and how much of me is those whom I love—is a simple manifestation of this dilemma.

This means that the behavior of open systems can be understood only in the context of their environment. Fortunately, we were able to observe that behavior of the variables in the environment, although uncontrollable, is more or less predictable. The less controllable a variable the more predictable it becomes. This realization led to the formulation of the first rule for getting a handle on open social systems: the imperatives of *predict* and *prepare*. Predicting the environment and preparing the system for it became the foundation of the neo-classical school of management. The emergence of econometric models created a game that was learned and played artfully by almost all entities. But success changed the game. In recent years we have observed, with much apprehension, that most of the predictions made by our prize-winning models were wrong. Subsequently, we discovered that we had missed a whole new category of variables: those variables that we do not control but instead *influence.* To control means that an action is both necessary and sufficient to produce the intended outcome. To influence means that the action is not sufficient; it is only a co-producer. As our knowledge about the environment increased, so did our ability to convert uncontrollable variables to those that could be influenced. As we increased our ability to influence a variable, we decreased our ability to predict it. (If a rain dance had any influence on the weather, we would not be able to predict the weather, because we would not know what kind of dance each group of people is performing). The new categories of variables, those that can be influenced, form a new region called the *transactional environment.* It includes all of the critical stakeholders of a system: customers, suppliers, owners and, ironically, the members themselves. Slowly, we are realizing that we do not actually control much of anything, but do have the ability to influence many things. Managing a social system is becoming more and more about managing upward its transactional environment. This means the ability to influence those we do not control, which requires learning why people do what they do.

Purposefulness

Purposefulness is about the why question. Why people do what they do is a matter of choice. Choice has three interdependent dimensions: *rational, emotional and cultural*.

Rational choice is the domain of self-interest—the interest of the decision-maker, not the observer. A rational choice is not necessarily a wise choice. It reflects only the perceived interest or the "rationale" of the decision-maker at the time.

The emotional choice is the domain of beauty and excitement, in contrast to rational choice, which relies on instrumental values. The emotional dimension deals with stylistic values. It is the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from the emotional state in and of itself. While rational choice is risk-aversive, emotional choice is not. Risk is an important attribute of excitement and challenge.

But culture defines the ethical norms of the collectivity, and acts as the default decision system. For example, if we do not decide explicitly what kind of parent we want to be, our culture makes this decision for us. When we repeatedly use default values, we tend to forget that we have a choice. Instead, we treat such values as "realities out there," undermining the fact that

those "realities" will remain "out there" as long as no one is willing to challenge them. The problem is that the implicitness of the underlying assumptions prevents actors from questioning their validity; therefore, the defaults usually remain unchallenged and become obsolete.

Multidimensionality

Multidimensionality is probably one of the most potent principles of systems thinking. It is the ability to see complementary relations in opposing tendencies. This mutual interdependence of opposing tendencies is characterized by an "and" instead of an "or" relationship. Unfortunately, for the majority of cultures, a dualistic fallacy has dominated the treatment of opposing tendencies. Everything seems to come in a pair of opposites: collectivity/individuality, production/distribution, security/freedom, modernity/tradition, order/complexity, art/science. These pairs are cast as a "zero-sum-game" such that a win for one is invariably associated with a loss for the other. It seems as though we live in an age of paradoxes. Even time-honored values such as freedom and justice are not spared. Boulding (1953) acknowledges this dilemma with the observation that some are afraid of *freedom*, seeing always behind it the specter of anarchy, whereas others are afraid of *justice*, seeing always behind it the specter of tyranny. Furthermore, consider the relation between security and freedom. One cannot be free if one is not secure; one will not be secure if one is not free. Maybe freedom, justice, and security are three aspects of the same thing and were not meant to be separated in the first place. Certainly, treating them in isolation has been problematic.

Emergent Property

Emergent property is the property of the whole, not that of the parts. It is the product of interactions of the parts, not their independent actions. Significant social phenomena such as love, life, happiness, success and many others are emergent properties. I can love but none of my parts can love. If you take me apart you will lose the phenomenon of love. Emergent property cannot be deduced from the properties of the parts. It cannot be sensed by any one of the five senses and thus cannot be measured directly. The mere notion that emergent property is the product of interaction of the parts signifies a dynamic phenomenon produced on-line in real-time. Therefore, life, love, happiness, and success are not one-time propositions; they have to be reproduced continuously. If the processes that generate them come to an end, the phenomena will cease to exist as well. They cannot even be saved or stored for future use. They can be there one moment and gone the next.

Counterintuitive Behavior

Social dynamics are fraught with counterintuitive behavior. They stand on a level of complexity beyond the reach of the analytical approach. This means that actions intended to produce a desired outcome may, in fact, generate opposite results. It has been said that the path to hell is paved with good intentions. Things can get worse before getting better, or vice versa. One can win or lose for the wrong reason.

To appreciate the nature of this behavior one needs to understand the practical implications of the following assertions:

1. An event may have multiple effects, each with a different time frame.
2. Cause and effect may be separated in time and space.
3. Cause and effect may replace each another, displaying circular relations.
4. An effect may have an independent life of its own; removing the cause will not necessarily remove the effect.

Information-Bonded System

According to Lazlo (1972), many things about the behavior of a social system refer to the interaction rather than the individuality of its members. Each social system manifests certain characteristics that it may retain even if all its individual members are replaced.

The elements that characterize a social system are not only its members, but also the relationship of its members to one another and to the whole. This is, of course, implicit in the definition of a system. Some kind of linkage between the elements is presupposed if the aggregate is to be considered a system. The point of emphasis, then, is not the existence of a relationship, but the assumptions regarding the nature of the relationship. Relationships in turn depend on the nature of the bonds that link and hold the components of the system together. In this context, there are fundamental differences between the nature of the bond in mechanical systems and those in sociocultural systems.

While the elements of mechanical systems are *energy-bonded*, those of sociocultural systems are *information-bonded*. In energy-bonded systems, laws of classical physics govern the relationship existing between the elements. Integration of the parts is a one-time proposition. Nail two boards together, and they stay that way until the wood rots, the nails rust, or a pry bar separates them. In energy-bonded systems, passive and predictable functioning of parts is a must, until a part breaks down. But the behavior of active parts of an information-bonded system is a different proposition: An automobile yields to its driver regardless of his expertise and dexterity. If a driver decides to run a car into a solid wall, the car will hit the wall without objection. Riding a horse, however, presents a different perspective. It matters to the horse whom the rider is, and a proper ride can be achieved only after a series of information exchanges between the horse and the rider. Horse and rider form an information-bonded system in which guidance and control are achieved by agreement based on a common perception. A sociocultural system is viewed as a set of elements linked almost entirely by interconnection of information. It is an organization of meanings emerging from a network of interactions among individuals. Integration of an information-bonded system into a cohesive whole is a lifetime struggle. To appreciate the unique challenges of integrating the members of a social system, think about the challenges of maintaining marriage, families, or any other close-knit group of human beings—each with a mind of his or her own. To clarify the meaning of information-bonded systems, we need to examine the concept of *culture* in more detail.

Culture

Image building and abstraction are among the most significant characteristics of human beings, allowing them not only to form and interpret images of real things, but also to use these images to create images of things that may not exist. These images are then synthesized into a unified, meaningful mental model and eventually into a worldview (Boulding, 1956). The dialectical interaction between objective and subjective realities lies at the core of a process called *design thinking* responsible for the dynamic development of human societies. This is so true that Nigel Cross (2007) makes the following indisputable observation: "Everything we have around us has been designed" (p. 34).

Co-produced by the environment and man's unique process of creativity, the image (itself a beautiful design) establishes a link between man and his environment. It consists of a system of implicit assumptions on the nature of spatio-temporal-causal realities, along with concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, and one's perceived role in the environment. Of course, once an image is formed, it acts as a filter that rejects all contrary messages. A considerable part of this image or mental model of the universe is shared with others who live in the same social setting. The rest remains private and personal (Figure 2). It is the shared image that constitutes the principal bond among members of a human community and provides the necessary conditions for any meaningful interactions. The extent to which the image of an individual coincides with the "shared image" of a community determines the degree of his membership in that community. For example, the assumption that nurses report to nurses and doctors report to doctors is an unquestionable part of the shared image among members of a health care system.

It is the "*shared image*" that we refer to as the *culture* of a people. This shared image incorporates their experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and ideals. Culture is the ultimate product of their history and the manifestation of their identity—man creates his culture and his culture creates him.
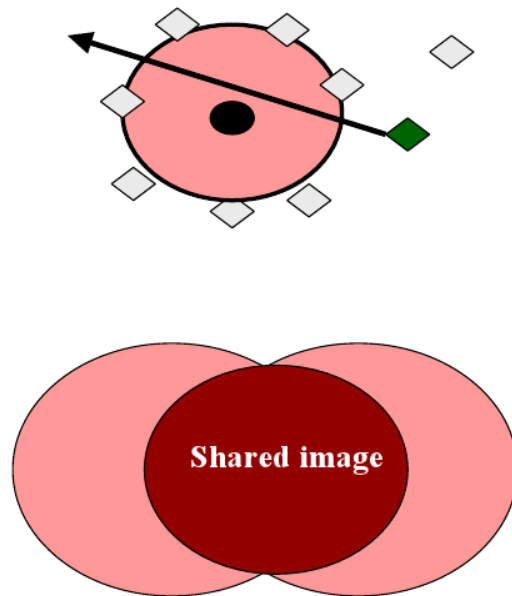
Figure 2. **Shared image and culture.**

Although culture pre-exists for individuals, it can be transformed and reproduced by their purposeful actions. It is here that the key obstacles to and opportunities for development are found, including the collective ability and desire of a people to create the future they want. Human culture, with all its complexity, ambiguity, and manifold potentialities, stands at the center of the process of change. This is so true that the success of individual actions invariably depends on the degree to which they penetrate and modify the "shared image."

Self-Organization

Self-organization, movement towards a predefined order, is one of critical conceptions that describe the essence of the behavior of sociocultural systems. This is a conception shared by four contemporary theories: *quantum theory, chaos theory, living systems theory,* and *Santiago theory.*

The formidable second law of thermodynamics states that the universe as a *closed system* has a tendency toward elimination of all distinctions. Thus, the ultimate state is sameness and randomness, a chaotic simplicity. Entropy (S), the measure of randomness and sameness, will therefore always increase.

But one of the major findings of quantum theory is the recognition that the universe is an *open system.* Open systems are neg-entropic (-S) and exhibit a tendency toward order. This

means that according to quantum theory, the universe is a self-organizing system, continuously expanding and moving toward increasing order and complexity (Wheatley, 1994).

Despite its name, chaos theory (Gleick, 1987) considers the tendency toward order a natural phenomenon produced by the action of four types of attractors. There is an order in chaos, and the objective of chaos theory is to discover the hidden order or the attractor responsible for creation of the chaotic order.

Living systems theorist Stuart Kauffman (1995), in his book *At Home in the Universe*, sees self-organization as the co-producer of the stunning biological complexity around us. "Molecules of all varieties join in a metabolic dance to make cells. Cells interact with cells to form organisms; organisms interact with organisms to form ecosystems, societies. Where did this grand architecture come from?" (p. VII). Kauffman further maintains, "For more than a century, the only theory that science has offered to explain how this order arose is natural selection. But in crafting the living world, selection has always acted on systems that exhibit spontaneous order. Formation of this underlying order further honed by selection needs to be explained as well" (p. VIII). He then concludes that a natural tendency to self-organize must be present in the formation of the initial order. For Capra (2002), the organizing activity of living systems, at all levels of life, is a mental activity. "The process of living is a process of cognition. To live is to know" (p. 34).

The central insight of Santiago theory (Maturana & Varela, 1980) is also the identification of cognition, the process of knowing, with the process of life. According to Santiago theory, consciousness is a special kind of cognitive process that emerges when cognition reaches a certain level of complexity. Reflective consciousness involves a level of cognitive abstraction that includes the ability to form *mental images*. It is appreciation of this incredible ability to create a mental image that brings new understanding of life to the social domain. It provides a crucial clue to understanding the nature of social bonds, the process of socialization, and human development.

I have argued extensively in a previous work (Gharajedaghi, 2011) that to be self-organizing and to move toward a predefined order, a social system must possess a means of knowing, an internal image of what it wants to be. I have also suggested that in the same way that DNA is the source of this image for biological systems, culture (i.e., a shared image) is the source of blueprints for the future of sociocultural systems. The image of this future provides default values for all decisions and stands at the center of the process of change. That is why despite all kinds of obstructions, sociocultural systems seem to pursue a predefined order with tenacity. The persistence of default values explains why it is so difficult to induce change into sociocultural systems. Unless their stored image is altered, sociocultural systems go on to replicate themselves almost indefinitely.

The shared image, therefore, stands at the center of the process of change. The triumphant resurgence of old patterns of behavior despite the concerted efforts of change agents is an uninterrupted source of frustration. What seems to make this stubborn insurgency so overpowering is the fact that a set of organizing principles (cultural codes) makes the system behave the way it does, are implicit, and more often than not are considered to be sacred.

The subset of implicit cultural codes responsible for regenerating the existing order is what we metaphorically refer to as the "second-order-machine." The second-order-machine is equivalent to the notion of the attractor in chaos theory. To produce a change in the behavioral pattern of a social system, its underlying assumptions need to be challenged. A new set of alternatives must be generated and the attractor in action must be modified. How, then, does change enter a social system?

Social Learning

Although social systems learn through the members who adjust their worldviews by mapping new realities and observing the actual or potential results of their actions, social learning is not the sum of each member's independent learning. Rather, it is their collective, shared learning. Sociocultural systems manifest greater inertia and resistance to change than do their individual members. The inertia of a culture is greater because a shared image is a stronger filter than private images. The shared image tunes the receptors for particular messages. Messages consistent with the image are absorbed and reinforced, while contradictory and antagonistic ones are ignored. This phenomenon, although an impediment to change, acts as a defense mechanism and has a structure-maintaining function. However, failure of a social system to learn leads to major difficulties. For instance, as systems become more sophisticated and problems become more profound, the increasing disconnection between science and the public image becomes the dilemma of the democratic process and remains a challenge. The disconnection happens in a dynamic process with several stages of dissociation. At the outset, since truth is commonly identified with simplicity and comprehensibility, what one does not understand is simply rejected as false. Further, a high level of specialization in science moves it further away from the common image, creating a small, isolated subculture. Ultimately, creation of a scientific subculture that fails to communicate its insights reduces the influence of science on the behavior of the public at large at just the time when it may be needed most.

Fear of rejection and a strong tendency toward conformity among members of a social system are the other major obstructions to social learning. Despite a desire for individuality and uniqueness, as vulnerable social beings we display a strong tendency to be members of a collectivity. Most of us have a burning desire to identify with others, to be accepted by others, and to conform to the norms of the collectivity. This phenomenon underscores the importance of peer grouping and the impact of peer pressure, especially in the context of public education. Unfortunately, the fate of many underprivileged youth in our existing system of education is predetermined by the zip code where they were born or raised. Carrying a book in Center City, Philadelphia, was once considered playing the white man's game and punishable by exclusion from the community.

Effective social learning, therefore, is about cultural transformation. More specifically, it is about changing the default values of the organizing principles. But challenging the conventional wisdom demands questioning sacred assumptions. This is a learning process of the second order, which must be distinguished from first-order learning, where the underlying assumptions governing the selection of alternatives remain unchallenged. Second-order learning, on the other hand, involves challenging the assumptions (Ackoff, 1999). It represents a

qualitative change that identifies a new set of alternatives and objectives. Second-order learning redefines the rules for first-order learning and provides for orderly transformation and development of sociocultural systems.

In this context, ideologies in any form or type are major obstructions to viability of a sociocultural system. The significant and common characteristic of all ideologies is a claim for ultimate truth with a predefined set of ends and means. Underlying assumptions are not to be questioned by true believers. This is incompatible with second-order learning that requires questioning sacred assumptions and challenging implicit sets of default values.

Unfortunately, it is here that major obstructions to development of sociocultural systems are found. Members of many traditional societies lack the freedom to question any one of their sacred cultural codes. Instead, most are subject to enormous intimidation by traditional forces. Questioning a sacred practice is often treated as an insult and is punishable by death in such systems. But the ability to question sacred assumptions—without fear of repercussion—is not only an individual right, but also a necessary social good that must be preserved at any price. Sometimes intimidating forces present such monumental obstructions to development that paying any price to remove them might be justified. So true is this that even the tragic intervention of outside power, if it results in dissolving the entrenched intimidating forces, may prove to be a tipping point for potent cultural evolution. The transformation of Turkey (dissolving Ottoman Empire) and Japan (defeat of militarism) provide sobering examples of this argument.

On the other hand, seemingly stable but frustrated social systems may experience a sudden, unexpected change. This phenomenon is produced when a small disturbance is fed back on itself to create a monumental impact. Of course, disturbance to any system will be resisted when it first appears. But if it survives the first attempts at suppression and resonates with pre-existing frustrations within the system, an iterative process of deviation amplification begins. This is how frustrated masses motivated by hatred can produce a phenomenal change in the structure of a less developed social system. Unfortunately, without the formation of an explicitly inclusive shared image of a desired future, chaotic struggles may not produce transformation to a self-evolving, purposeful, sociocultural system.

The reality of highly developed sociocultural systems that have outgrown the secure web of paternalistic cultures is fundamentally different from those that are still trapped within the confines of traditional and paternalistic cultures. Unless paternalistic cultural codes are properly challenged and modified, the repeated pattern of authoritarian ruler and alienated people will continue to emerge. (The Islamic Revolution of Iran and the collapse of the Soviet Union are the most recent anecdotal evidence.)

Development

Development is the core concept of a systems' view of the world. In contrast to mechanistic and biological views, which are respectively concerned with efficiency and growth, the sociocultural view is basically concerned with development. Development of a social system is a collective learning process by which a social system increases its *ability* and *desire* to serve

both its members and its environment by the constant pursuit of knowledge, wealth, beauty, power, and values. Desire and ability therefore are the key active agents of this process.

Desire

Desire is produced by an exciting vision of a future enhanced by the interaction of creative and recreative processes. The creative capacity of man, along with his/her desire to share, results in an exciting process of change. This generates dissatisfaction with the present and motivates pursuit of more challenging and desirable ends. Otherwise, life proceeds simply by setting and seeking attainable goals that rarely escape the limits of the familiar.

Unfortunately, fundamentalist interpretations of some religions maintain that human beings are not allowed to engage in any act of creation. Art in almost any form—whether painting, sculpture, music, or drama—is prohibited. Recreation is also considered sinful. This antagonistic attitude toward aesthetics militates against social development in that it does not provide much opportunity to articulate and expand one's horizon beyond the immediate needs of mere existence. This self-limitation provides one explanation for cases of underdevelopment despite the availability of vast resources.

Dissatisfaction with the present, although a precondition for change, is not sufficient to ensure development. What seems to be necessary as well is a faith in one's ability to partly control the march of events. Those who are awed by their environment and place the shaping forces of their future outside of themselves do not think of voluntary or conscious change, no matter how miserable and frustrated they are.

Ability

Ability, on the other hand, is about the power to do. It is the potential to control, influence, and appreciate the parameters that affect the system's existence. More specifically, it is about the generation and dissemination of knowledge, about the freedom to choose, and competence to create technologies that in turn generate and disseminate wealth, power, and beauty, and enhance quality of life throughout the social system.

The viability of a developed society therefore, lies in its *creative ability* to meet the challenges of *emerging desires*. It is a struggle for the creation of new dimensions, appreciation of new realities, and finally enrichment of the shared image. It is a collective learning process that entails coordinated changes in motivation, knowledge, and understanding throughout the social system. Design thinking, as systems methodology, aims at the core of this conception (Gharajedaghi, 2011). Its ultimate objective is to replace the distorted "shared image" responsible for regenerating a pattern of malfunctioning order with a shared image of a more desirable future. This pretentious and daring optimism, however, is based on the following assumptions:

- The best way to learn and understand a system is to redesign it.
- Penetrating the shared image is more likely a question of excitement than logic.
- People are more likely to accept a change if they had a hand in shaping it.

Ideological Terrorism

Finally, our discussion of sociocultural systems would not be complete without mentioning a phenomenon that has become a troubling source of contention in our increasingly global community.

Civilization, according to systems thinking, is the emergent outcome of the interaction between culture (the software) and technology (the hardware; Figure 3).

Technology is universal, proliferating with no resistance, whereas cultures are local, resisting change with tenacity. In an open society, culture evolves with technological advances, but in closed societies incompatibility between modern technology and the traditional culture leads to reactionary struggles. Fundamentalists are neither able to resist using the new technology nor able to tolerate its influence on their traditional values. The problem is amplified by the unfortunate fact that some cultures are producers of technology while others are only its consumers. Imported technologies that produce unwelcome changes in traditional ways of life are often seen as "cultural invasions." This leads to reactionary movements and ideological terrorism that have become critical obstructions to development of peaceful international order.
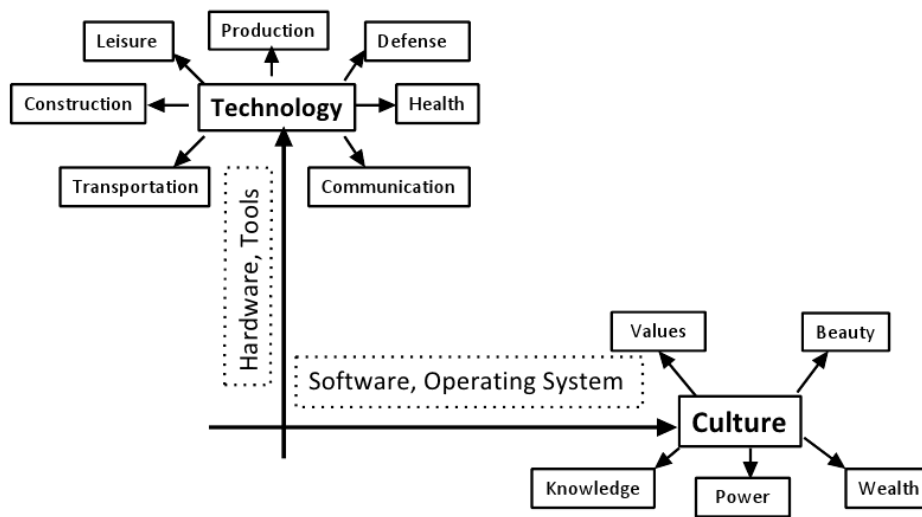
Figure 3. **Two dimensions of civilization.**

There is no agreement on the operational definition of terrorism. One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. However, irrespective of where one is coming from, there is no question that terrorism is based on the false assumption of the "zero-sum-game": If you lose I will win. As systems get more sophisticated they become increasingly more vulnerable to the actions of the few. Making the other side lose becomes easier than trying to win oneself. This is why terrorism becomes the favorite means of weaker sides when confronting stronger enemies. Nevertheless, this unfortunate strategy always results in a lose/lose outcome.

To get a handle on terrorism I propose to look at it as a means toward an end. The ends in this context seem to fall into one of three categories: *revenge*, *cry for help*, or *ideological battle.*

Terrorism as revenge is a random act that is difficult to detect. *Terrorism as cry for help*, on the other hand, represents the struggle of desperate people trapped in an unfortunate, unjust politico-economic mess. This type of terrorism is a reflection of sustained frustration of a people unable to deal with their humiliating powerlessness through normal channels. The most effective way to stop this type of terror is to dissolve the paralyzing impasse.

Terrorism in ideological battle is a different story. Ideological terrorism, in all of its manifestations, left or right, has used intimidation and random terror to impose its value systems or preferred way of life on the population at large. The strategy is based on the assumption that to paralyze the opposition, one should make it feel guilty and insecure**.** This type of terrorism usually needs a powerful enemy to hate. Hate, converted to need, becomes a way of life. It produces goal-seeking robots. These robotic true believers are capable of brutality incomprehensible to normal human beings. Unfortunately, people involved in the first and second types of terrorism become foot soldiers for the people of the third type. This challenge is so profound that nothing short of a true cultural transformation can dissolve it. One important agent in this long, critical process is the freedom and emancipation of women (Brooks, Chapter 15).

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Chapter 2

Ethical Dilemmas of Encountering Other Cultures: An Introduction

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"*Carthago delenda est*." This proclamation by Cato the Elder during the Roman Republic in 146 BCE that Carthage must be destroyed represents one possible attitude toward an encounter with another culture—alas, far too common in human history, but thankfully one rarely advocated, or at least acknowledged openly, today. We can call this attitude toward the ethical dilemmas of encountering another culture "Carthaginian" and place it at one extreme end of a spectrum. At the opposite end of this spectrum, let us place a rather simplified view of the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead (1928/2001). Here the task is to understand, translate, and learn from the customs of another culture by studying it as fully and unobtrusively as possible; that Mead's account in her famous *Coming of Age in Samoa* should have come under deep criticism for its mistakes and alleged gullibility shows that achieving this kind of understanding is no simple matter, even for those whose profession it is (Freeman, 1983; Mead, 1928/2001). We can begin our inquiry by placing our problem between these two extremes: for surely it is safe to assume that in any conceivable contemporary encounter between our military and another culture we would seek neither to destroy it (and capture any survivors for sale in slavery) nor simply to engage in an anthropological expedition, designed solely to advance our understanding (or perhaps complete someone's dissertation research). Between these two extremes, of course, lies an immense landscape of possibilities.

How should we mark out the distinguishing features of this landscape? Any ethical, or for that matter strategic, analysis of a given encounter must begin with an account of its intended purpose. What is the goal of the enterprise? In the just war tradition, questions of purpose are treated as part of a *jus ad bellum* inquiry. And let us recall that in the tradition, the presumption was against war and the overarching question was, "May the Christian, without sin, wage war?" The answer given by St. Augustine, and refined over many centuries, was yes, as long as certain conditions were met. Originally, Augustine mentioned three: (1) just cause (most often "injury received"), (2) right/competent authority, and (3) right intention. Later writers and lawyers have added four more, usually listed as (4) comparative justice, (5) proportionality, (6) last resort, and (7) reasonable chance of success. There is a veritable mountain of literature on this subject, but I will do no more than mention it here because in most modern democracies, and certainly in the United States, the responsibility for addressing questions of *jus ad bellum* rests with civilian leaders. The military may offer advice (and there are many ethical questions raised by the kind of advice military leaders can and should provide to civilian leaders), but the burden of the decision to engage in a military operation, whether we call it war or humanitarian intervention, rests with the civilian leaders. So as a way to begin our discussion let's examine the issue of whether and how the civilian leadership has engaged in a reasonable process of determining the purpose of the action, and has communicated this purpose adequately to the military assigned to carry it out.

The fact that civilians decide on where the military should go and what the purpose of the action should be does not absolve a conscientious military leadership from undertaking its ethical obligations. Three of the criteria in *jus ad bellum* require some kind of assessment from military experts. Can the proposed operation be carried out in a way that meets the test of proportionality—that is, are the foreseeable evils that will result from undertaking the action outweighed by the good that is sought? Does the proposed encounter have a reasonable chance of success? Are there measures short of sending troops that could accomplish the goal? All these questions require good, honest intelligence appraisals (not just a "can-do" attitude or wishful thinking born of a particular set of assumptions) that any military would have to offer. It is a settled principle of ethics that "ought implies can"; in other words, there can be no moral obligation to undertake something that is impossible to do. So from the very beginning of any contemplated military action, there is an obligation, I believe, for civilian leaders to seek, and military officers to provide, honest views of whether something can be done at all, and whether it can be done within the bounds of ethics and law.

Thus, even before we send a single Soldier on any kind of mission that will involve encountering another culture, a serious strategic and ethical inquiry must be undertaken. Note the conjoining of strategic and ethical here: in my view serious problems result from trying to isolate the ethical questions from the strategic goals, as if ethical concerns were a kind of afterthought or checklist to run down after the important decisions have been made. The ethical considerations should be built into the evaluation from the beginning. What values are we pursuing here? Can they be achieved with the means we are proposing? How reliable is our information about the local conditions? It is important to emphasize that this kind of information about prospects of success, the likely attitude of local populations, the depth and ferocity of armed resistance, and the character of divisions within the target territory is notoriously difficult to obtain and far from simple to evaluate.

Sometimes ethical certainty about the justice of one's cause affects the evaluation of information received. John F. Kennedy, in the third month of his presidency, was assured that Cubans would rise up in rebellion against Fidel Castro if only he would support an invasion by an "army" of Cuban exiles based in Florida. Surely the loathing of Castro by these exiles, shared by many within the CIA at the time, colored the way American policymakers judged the likelihood of such an indigenous uprising. It seems clear that in this case, the certainty of the Cuban exiles about the unpopularity of the Castro regime fed into the assumptions of American intelligence officers. Together, these assumptions led to a deeply flawed evaluation of the prospects of the exile army's landing at the Bay of Pigs.

The outsize influence of exiles was felt more recently in the American invasion of Iraq. Iraqi exiles in the United States encouraged American policymakers to believe that Saddam Hussein's regime was deeply reviled by the Iraqi people and would be easily replaced after an invasion.[2] These views reinforced a widely shared conviction throughout the policymaking community—and even among human rights activists like Michael Ignatieff—that Hussein surely deserved to be removed because of the threat that his possession of nuclear weapons represented

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[2]Prominent among these exiles was Ahmed Chalabi. For an examination of his role, see Dizard (2004) and Bonin (2011).

(Ignatieff, 2003). These apparent certainties, especially about the need for "regime change," attached to broader narrative about the need for decisive, and if necessary unilateral, American leadership, combined with the blithe belief that "demolishing Hussein's military power and liberating Iraq would be a cakewalk" (Adelman, 2002, p. A27), resulted in profound misjudgments about the reception our Soldiers would receive in Iraq and the ease of achieving regime change. My point here is not to relive the decision-making process that led to the invasion of Iraq—which obviously had its flaws—but to emphasize the point that ethical convictions, whether acknowledged or not, deeply affect the way we seek and evaluate "objective" information. This is not to retreat into some kind of postmodern relativism about truth, but rather to emphasize an observed fact of human decision-making. The beginning of ethical evaluation requires an honest assessment of one's own convictions and of the way they influence our evaluation of a given situation.

Here the ethical obligation would appear to merge into a process recommendation: civilian leaders who send Soldiers into danger must encourage and respect an environment of honest debate within the policymaking community. Many political scientists have studied this and offered their recommendations (Jervis, 2011; Neustadt & May, 1988); that is not my purpose here. Rather it is to state that all members of a decision-making team have an obligation to undertake a serious review of the viability of a given course of action. This serious review should include a rigorous examination of the strategic, legal, and moral implications of all policy alternatives. Good intentions are not enough, as just war writers have long recognized. The beginning of ethical wisdom here fits nicely with the beginning of effective policy analysis: recognize one's biases and try to correct for them with an open process of policy debate. This is as much an ethical obligation as it is an imperative for good policy.

Ethics, Universality, Relativism

At this point in the discussion, it seems fair to imagine an impatient reader thinking, "This is fine, but what does he mean by ethical?" Now of course the vast literature on the character, sources, and foundations of morality defies even the most superficial attempt at summary, so none will be attempted here. One may in any case doubt whether an anthology on sociocultural systems would be the place to look for a summary, let alone solution, to this perennial issue. Nevertheless we cannot talk ethical dilemmas without at least some gesture at defining the moral context of the term—hence this brief discussion.

As a starting point, let us stipulate with Frankena (1973), who cites David Hume, that an ethical judgment is one that can plausibly take "a universal point of view": "The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation" (p. 109). A Kantian would put it somewhat differently: morality involves adherence to a rationally derived categorical imperative. Common to both, and I believe to all ethical systems, even without agreement on the foundations of morality, or on the specifics of its content, is the demand that an ethical judgment must be able to adopt this "universal point of view." On this, utilitarians, deontologists, and virtue ethicists agree: a moral argument at least aspires to universality. This point of view may be, as Parekh (1999) argues, a "non-ethnocentric" or "pluralist" universalism, but a morality aspires in principle to apply to more than a specific person or group in a specific time and place (p.158). Some philosophers call this "universal point

of view" the "view from nowhere," by which they mean a view of the situation not tied to one particular place or time (Nagel, 1986).

An insistence that ethics requires some attempt to adopt a universal point of view stands squarely at odds with most versions of cultural relativism. Doctrines of relativism, and especially of cultural relativism, point to the diversity of moral codes and practices one can find in different societies and religions. At one level, descriptive, or empirical, relativism seems unassailable; the evidence of variations would appear obvious. Some have tried to explain this variation in, say, punishments or sexual mores as the result of historical circumstances, or cultural traditions, or mistaken factual beliefs, not of basic differences in underlying moral standards; indeed it has been asserted that the same basic values about promises, respect for life, and mutual aid can be found in all cultures, that there are basic ethical "criteria derivable from all major ethical systems and acknowledged in many national constitutions" (Kelman, 1977, p. 543; see also Bok, 1995). But, however promising, these arguments seem fragile, even if one recognizes that cultural practices everywhere do not simply and accurately reflect underlying norms. The evidence of a plurality of value systems seems clear.

The real issue is not the existence of variations in practice; it is the ethical implications of such variations. For relativism as commonly understood makes a leap from the description of differences to the normative assertion that "right" in general means "right for a given society" and "that (therefore) it is wrong for people in one society to condemn, interfere with, etc., the values of another society" (Williams, 1972, p. 20). In this view what is right for one society or culture may not be right for another; the moral claims of different societies or cultures hold equal validity and we ought not "impose" one morality over another. The moral philosopher Bernard Williams (1972) calls this "the anthropologist's heresy" (pp. 20-21). This view can be refuted on two main grounds. First, it is inconsistent: a nonrelative requirement of toleration (we cannot judge or interfere) somehow grows out of a view of morality that is supposedly relative and denies all universal norms. Whence comes this—unacknowledged yet still universal—requirement for tolerance? On what grounds does one justify the duty of non-interference? And why should it take precedence over other *prima facie* duties? Secondly, as R. J. Vincent (1986) argues, descriptive relativism by definition cannot rank values or cultures as equal or unequal; it simply notes that there are differences. To proceed from here to the belief that what is morally good for some would be bad for others assumes that there are differences not only in social structures and in (empirical) value systems, but also in the moral capabilities and moral worth among peoples. This seems a morally arrogant, even obnoxious, postulate—one that, in Frankena's words, seems "to violate the requirements of consistency and universalization" at the heart of moral discourse (1973, pp.109-110).

Another form of relativism also leaps from an asserted *is* to *ought* and seems to me equally unpersuasive. "Meta-ethical relativism" holds that "there is no objectively valid, rational way of justifying one [ethical judgment] against another; consequently two conflicting basic judgments may be equally valid" (Frankena, 1973, p. 109). But this sort of relativism, though consistent, also rests on the descriptive relativism just described and therefore bases its normative assertions on anthropological accounts of "differences in conceptual understanding and factual belief" (Frankena, 1973, p. 110). Even if one admits that societies differ not only in their structures and their traditions, or in the ways they carry out similar values, but also in their

moral judgments, these accounts do not demonstrate "that people's basic ethical judgments would still be different even if they were fully enlightened, conceptually clear, shared the same factual beliefs, and were taking the same point of view" (Frankena, 1973, pp. 109-110); yet, as Frankena argues, for meta-ethical relativism to be persuasive, it would have to prove precisely this. Moreover, this view never confronts the difficult issue—one we will see has practical implications for the question of encountering other cultures—of how one determines the spokesmen and content of an "authentic" culture and thus of its supposed culturally determined values.

The utilitarian philosopher Peter Singer (1979) has put the issue in these terms: "Anyone who has thought about an ethical decision knows that being told what our society thinks we ought to do does not settle our decision" (p. 88). He offers the example of the non-conformist who opposes slavery in a society that approves and practices it. According to relativism, such a person would be "making a simple factual error. An opinion poll could demonstrate the error of an ethical judgment" (p. 88). Ethical relativism reduces morality to an asserted consensus within a society; it cannot serve as the basis of ethics. The example of the nonconformist rejecting slavery is especially instructive here—for if ethical relativism were correct, one would have no resources to argue against it, no higher principle to which one could appeal. Given existing practices, there would be no basis for the argument. One would simply have to wait for practices and beliefs to change inexplicably. Dialogue across cultures on ethical issues could not occur; as Berlin (1998) puts it memorably, "My values are mine, yours are yours, and if we clash, too bad, neither of us can claim to be right" (p. 58).

Relativism represents an overreaction to the form of moral arrogance that assumes one's own moral code to be self-evidently superior to all others and therefore to be imposed on all other cultural or national groups; it seemingly suspends all judgment on moral questions. But relativism smuggles in a more insidious kind of moral arrogance. It seems to assume that people elsewhere have not reached one's own high level of morality, or are incapable of doing so; it fails to distinguish between practices derived from specific beliefs and the *capacity* for universal moral reasoning. It is obviously true that many human rights valued in some societies are not protected in others. But this fact does not mean that the people in those other places cannot *understand* these rights or that they do not claim, desire, or need them. Cultural relativism, by definition, has no standard by which to judge the claims, needs, and desires of other, supposedly fixed, traditions and cultures.

Judith Shklar (1998) has criticized relativism as "deeply illiberal, not only in its submission to tradition as an ideal, but in its dogmatic identification of every local practice with deeply shared local human aspiration" (p. 16). She goes on to write that:

> The unspoken and sanctified practices that prevail within every tribal border can never be openly analyzed or appraised, for they are by definition already permanently settled within the communal consciousness. Unless there is an open and public review of all the practical alternatives, especially of the new and the alien, there can be no responsible choices and no way of controlling the authorities that claim to be the voice of the people and its spirit. The arrogance of the prophet and bard who pronounce the embedded norms is far greater than that of any deontologist. For they profess not only to reveal a hidden popular soul but to do so in a manner that is not subject to extra-tribal review. (p. 16)

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Shklar (1998) makes these forceful points in the course of urging a "liberalism of fear." This she defines *not* as some highest aspiration of human social life, the elusive *summum bonum* of so much political philosophy, but rather as a *summum malum,* "which all of us know and would avoid if only we could. That evil is cruelty and the fear it inspires, and the very fear of fear itself" (p. 16). She argues that her liberalism of fear makes a compelling universal and cosmopolitan claim: the fear it seeks to prevent "is that which is created by arbitrary, unexpected, unnecessary, and unlicensed acts of force and by habitual and pervasive acts of cruelty and torture performed by military, paramilitary, and police agents in any regime" (p. 11). Shklar insists that the "liberalism of fear" makes a compelling claim to universality because its demands are, in her view, so basic. It does *not* confer the right to attempt to transplant a more expansive code of morality as if it were entirely true, superior, or perfect. Different societies can establish different priorities of values, different standards of happiness or the highest good. But these differences do not render their understandings of an underlying moral code to be inherently, and forever, incompatible. For her, what matters most is protection against arbitrary and pervasive cruelty. "We say 'never again,' but somewhere someone is being tortured right now, and acute fear has again become the most common form of social control. To this the horror of war must be added as a reminder. The liberalism of fear is a response to these undeniable realities and it therefore concentrates on damage control" (p. 9). So Shklar denies relativism and avoids a full-blown moral theory of her own. Instead, she offers a minimal but, in her view, essential and universal *summum malum* that we also seek to avoid, and, presumably, that we all have a responsibility to work against.

Isaiah Berlin's (1998) moral pluralism (which, according to Shklar, 1998, embodies a "meta-political assumption" that the liberalism of fear need not embrace) offers another way to negotiate a world of many apparently incompatible systems of morality without adopting a debilitating relativism. As I understand him, he argues that although there may be a plurality of incompatible moralities among which we must choose—without the aid of a compelling, meta-ethical criterion to guide our choice—nevertheless "respect between systems of values which are not necessarily hostile to each other is possible, and toleration and liberal consequences follow" (Berlin, 1998, p. 58). Even if one prefers a monistic view of morality ("only one set of values is true, all the others are false") oneself, a nuanced and realistic account of global responsibility must acknowledge the apparent plurality of ethical systems in the world. The task then is not so much to persuade the rest of the world of the exclusive rightness of one's view, but to encourage respect for difference in ways that still value our common humanity.

Ethics and Human Rights

The import of the discussion so far may be briefly summarized: an ethical position involves making judgments and justifying one's actions in terms that, in principle, should apply universally. Arguments asserting fixed cultural foundations of ethics fail a test of consistency and need not detain us long; but universality, properly understood, means more than projecting one's own values. Rather it implies an honest attempt to find some common ground between systems of morality that do not necessarily share a foundational worldview.

This may sound more difficult than it is because the discourse of human rights, which permeates contemporary politics, domestic and international, tries to do precisely this. The distinguished scholar Louis Henkin (1990) has put it this way:

> There is no agreement between the secular and the theological, or between traditional and modern perspectives, on man and the Universe. One cannot prove, or even persuade, whether a substantially free economy or substantial planning is more conducive to the good society or the good of individual man. But there is now a working consensus that every man and woman between birth and death, counts, and has a claim to an irreducible core of integrity and dignity. In the consensus, in the world we have and are shaping, the idea of human rights is the essential idea. (p. 193)

This "working consensus" exists for several different reasons. First, belief in human rights may proceed on several different foundations—philosophical or religious. One can, but, I emphasize, need not, take this universal, foundational approach to moral philosophy to believe in the idea of human rights. Modern neo-Kantian philosophers like John Rawls, Thomas Pogge, or Charles Beitz have sought to provide such foundations, and many other deontological and natural law approaches to ethics are quite consistent with contemporary human rights discourse (Beitz, 1999; Gewirth, 1982; Pogge, 1989; Rawls, 1971/1999).[3] And despite their general hostility to rights-based ethical arguments, utilitarians, and especially rule utilitarians, find human rights to be a useful shorthand route to greater good.[4] Even an avowed anti- or non-foundationalist like Richard Rorty (1993), despite his disdain for foundations, nevertheless holds on to the idea of human rights as a useful expression of our "culturally influenced intuitions" (p. 5). So one may arrive at the idea of human rights using quite different philosophical, even meta-ethical, routes.

Some legal scholars like Henkin (1990), Harold Hongju Koh (1990), or Geoffrey Roberston (1999) avoid "philosophical constructs" altogether. In this second important stream of scholarship, human rights are essentially the result of agreements among states:

> In international instruments representatives of states declare and recognize human rights, define their content, and ordain their consequences within political societies and in the system of nation-states. The justification of human rights is rhetorical, not philosophical. Human rights are self-evident, implied in other ideas that are commonly intuited and accepted (Henkin, 1990, p. 2).

Here, the task of the analyst is not to seek a universal philosophical (or religious) foundation for the idea of human rights; rather, it is to trace the origin and development of the international law and institutions concerning human rights. This approach to human rights has the advantage of relying on actual negotiations, agreements, legal instruments, and the evolving practices and institutions designed to enforce the norms. It avowedly leaves the issue of foundations unaddressed as essentially irrelevant to the task of extending norms through the application of law. Scholarship in this stream plays a central role in understanding how abstract human rights norms affect real people (and, one might add, cultures) on the ground through the application of treaties and law.

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[3] See also Alan Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (1977); Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (1977); and Henry Shue, *Basic Rights* (1980).

[4] See for example Anthony Ellis, "Utilitarianism and International Ethics" in *Traditions of International Ethics*, edited by T. Nardin and D. Mapel (1993).

Finally, there is an approach to human rights that emphasizes its historical role in the evolution of modern states and the modern state system (Donnelly, 2003). Here human rights is treated as an extraordinarily effective idea—indeed, a vital tool, for the gradual elimination of tyranny and arbitrary rule. One may, without too much exaggeration, call this the approach of Kantian universal history. In this view, the importance of human rights lies not in the character of its foundation, nor in the evolution of international legal instruments, but in the role the idea of human rights has played in changing the way those with power may rule. This argument looks to the historical development of European politics as establishing a broad, historical pattern in which the values attached to human rights gradually, but inexorably, come to limit the arbitrary actions of government. Again, making no foundational claim, this approach to human rights emphasizes the sheer effectiveness of belief in the idea—human rights is seen as a kind of mobilizing and empowering ideology, with examples of this ranging from the Magna Carta to Tahrir Square. The more prevalent the belief that rightful title to rule entails respect for fundamental human rights, the more difficult it becomes for rulers who deny these rights to establish or maintain legitimacy. Ultimately, rulers who deny the applicability of human rights will be forced to rule without legitimacy; they will need to rely on fear, coercion, or the absence of viable alternatives. And if one shares Kant's confidence, or even a less teleological version of historical inevitability—consider George Kennan's remark in 1951 about the Soviet Union: "There can be no stability in any system which is based on the evil and weakness in man's nature" (p. 24)—the idea of human rights will eventually come to win the day.

Back Down to Earth: Ethical Dilemmas Facing Military Actors

The overall point of the foregoing discussion was to ground a definition of ethical action in a universal discourse that emphasizes human rights as the practical application of that discourse. We need not, as it were, define what is ethical for ourselves. But how does this apply to military actors encountering other cultures? I believe that employing this kind of ethical reasoning that emphasizes human rights can usefully supplement the traditional just war framework that is typically used and raise the level of sensitivity to questions of cultural interaction.

We have already seen that the *jus ad bellum* criteria, that is, those that interrogate the justice of entering into conflict in the first place, demand a full accounting of the purposes and likely effects of using force. The *jus in bello* rules within the tradition specify the rules of fighting, and emphasize three key points. First, the rules of fighting apply equally to both sides: the "just" side of a conflict cannot engage in otherwise illegal or unethical tactics. Second, the rules insist on the importance of discriminating between combatants and non-combatants. Third, the tradition tries to grapple with and limit the effects of "collateral damage" by defining rules of "double-effect," i.e., what damage is permissible as the side effect of legitimate acts of war. All this, needless to say, has inspired an enormous literature in at least three different disciplines: religious studies, political and philosophical theory, and military history and doctrine. I cannot review or even nod at that literature here.

The point is that this framework actually tells us very little about the special difficulties that arise from encountering other cultures. For this, I think we must turn to the human rights

discourse. First, does the encounter respect the human rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration and the treaties that grow out of it? Most broadly, will the encounter make it more or less possible for people in the other culture to realize the rights to which they are entitled? Henry Shue (1980) memorably distills a definition of human rights this way: "everyone's reasonable claims upon the rest of humanity" (p. 19). At every stage of a proposed encounter we should be asking whether it meets this most basic test. Are we responding to these claims or are we pursuing some other set of interests? If so, how does the pursuit of those interests affect the rights of the "target" population? In some instances, of course, as in a response to a humanitarian emergency, an encounter seeks to end an egregious, or block a threatened, violation of the most basic human right to life. The recent NATO action in Libya would seem to fit this criterion, whereas the inaction in the face of 1994 massacres in Rwanda demonstrates a collective failure to act.

The suggestion here, following the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty and adopted at the 2005 World Summit known as Responsibility to Protect, is that states and their militaries build the notion of protecting human rights into all their considerations of when to act in another country.[5] In other words, when we encounter another culture, we must consider rigorously what impact our action will have on the human rights of people immediately affected *and* on whether the proposed action strengthens or weakens the international human rights regime. This very basic question, I believe, should animate any assessment of a proposed action.

The next task, of course, is to assure that the actions contemplated are carried out in a way that serves the ends proposed. Here, following the Army/Marine Corps 2006 Field Manual on *Counterinsurgency* (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006), I will emphasize two main issues, without repeating the excellent discussion there. First, the manual stresses, in a complete chapter, the importance of ethics, and of proactive leadership and accountability. Specifically, it enjoins our personnel to acquire deep knowledge of all aspects of local conditions. Military leaders must "feel the pulse of the local populace, understand their motivations, and care about what they want and need. Genuine compassion and empathy for the populace prove an effective weapon against insurgents" (p. 7-2). This is laudable advice but is perhaps far more easily urged than accomplished. This kind of deep understanding is hard-won and fraught with difficulties, both practical and ethical. On whom should we rely for this information? How should we go about acquiring it, especially when, as is most often the case, our personnel do not speak or understand the local language? From the very beginning, in choosing translators, we make choices the full implications of which we may not fully understand. The 2006 manual addresses these questions, but frankly in a way that seems to assume unlimited resources and ideally available local people. It offers only the most general guidance about the friction (to use the term in its Clausewitzian sense) our people on the ground are likely to meet.

To illustrate this point, consider the following example told by Helen Epstein in her book on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. Dispatched as a medical researcher to Uganda, she discovered that even the most apparently trivial decisions she made (whom to hire as a driver,

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[5] For a summary of actions at this meeting in New York, September 14-16, 2005, see http://www.un.org/summit2005/presskit/fact_sheet.pdf

where to buy her lab refrigerator, whom to trust as an assistant) affected her standing and credibility in the wider community in ways she understood only imperfectly, if at all. Local people began to speak of slim AIDS and fat AIDS: people died of the former, but in the latter case prospered by serving Western researchers (Epstein, 2007). Multiply these issues exponentially by the huge footprint stamped on a local community by a military operation. Virtually any large infusion of outside actors will have cascading consequences in the local social and eco-system. We need to understand this from the outset. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect that outside military actors will ever be able "to feel the pulse of the local populace," however desirable that goal might be. They will have goals and interests that do not automatically correspond with ours.

So perhaps the first ethical imperative might be called "hermeneutical caution"—or, more simply, *modesty* about the likelihood of achieving a full understanding of a local people's concerns and aspirations. Why would this count as an ethical guideline? It should remind us not to project our goals on other people, and to respect their rights and autonomy. But what happens in the hard cases when, for example, young girls are forbidden to go to school, or local "bad actors" punish people for cooperating with efforts to rebuild or employ locals? Here I think the *Counterinsurgency* Field Manual has it right—the strategy must be iterative and with a heavy emphasis on achieving "the stable and secure environment needed for effective governance, essential services, and economic development" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006, p. 5-2). I would simply emphasize that, in practice, this is far more difficult to achieve than it is to enjoin—and a truly ethical policy would assess from the outset our willingness and ability to undertake the hard work of nation-building over the long haul. A hard lesson for us all to learn is that not every desirable goal is achievable even with the best intentions.

This brings me to a second point that deserves deeper discussion: at what point do actors in the field have a moral obligation to urge civilian leaders to correct, or even abandon, a course of action that they believe cannot be achieved using ethical means? Or, conversely, at what point must civilian leaders reassess their policy goals in light of local obstacles and resistance? Both sides seem to me to have this obligation. In some ways military personnel in the field are the proverbial canaries in the mine—if lapses in noncombatant discrimination continue to occur and seem to become systemic or, conversely, if placing our Soldiers at greater risk to avoid such occurrences leads to repeated losses among our forces, then a deep, and politically unpalatable, strategic review is needed.

In his treatment of the Vietnam War, Michael Walzer (1977) argues that ultimately the American effort was unjust because we could not fight it using ethical means. "Free fire zones" and the American-designed rules of engagement, he writes, violated ethics and law:

> The policy underlying the American rules of engagement actually envisaged the uprooting and resettlement of very substantial part of the rural population of Vietnam: millions of men, women and children. But that is an incredible task, and, leaving aside the likely criminality of the project, there was never more than a pretense that sufficient resources would be made to accomplish it. It was inevitable, then, and it was known to be inevitable, that civilians would be living in the villages that were shelled and bombed. (p. 191)

Now I don't wish to reargue the debate on Vietnam, and I would also say that current counterinsurgency doctrine articulated in the 2006 *Counterinsurgency* Field Manual is a world away from free fire zones and forced-draft urbanization. But the ethical issue remains: who bears responsibility for calling out a policy that invites or enables ethical lapses? I believe military commanders have the duty to inform civilian leaders if the policies they are told to follow cannot be carried out ethically. And this responsibility should go up and down the command chain. In my view, the failure in Vietnam should be shared by the (largely civilian) planners of these strategies and the military leaders who did not forcefully make the civilians understand the unethical consequences of their policies and the untenable situation in which they placed Soldiers. I am not making excuses for war crimes, but the massacre at My Lai did not occur in a vacuum.

So the second point here is to emphasize—as the *Counterinsurgency* Field Manual does, quite clearly—the continuing and iterative responsibility to evaluate policies as they are carried out. A single review at the outset will not suffice to meet this responsibility. Military commanders and civilian leaders both must continually reassess the assumptions of a given policy and the ethical challenges it presents to the Soldiers in the field. This must also extend to the local actors often relied on to carry out the strategy (especially including paid private contractors) and a willingness to reevaluate the reliability of local sources.

Conclusion

The Franco-Bulgarian scholar Tzvetan Todorov (1993, 1995) has written extensively, and with great erudition, on encountering other cultures. In *The Morals of History,* Todorov (1995) sets out four stages of approaching an understanding of another culture. In the first stage one tries to assimilate everything one can about the culture but one remains firmly in one's own identity. In the second stage, one tries to suppress one's own identity and becomes, as he puts it, "more Persian than the Persians" (p. 14). One imagines oneself to be objective: "As an ardent lover, I give up myself in order to fuse myself with the other" (p. 14). (Diplomats often refer to this phase as "going native.") In the third stage, one, so to speak, recognizes the impossibility of stage two: "I resume my identity . . . [and now seek] to establish a dialogue between myself and them; I perceive my own categories as just as relative as theirs. I abandon the prejudice of imagining that one can abandon all prejudice" (p. 14-15). Then, in Todorov's last stage, perhaps the most difficult to understand:

> I leave myself once again, but in an entirely different way. . . . The process can be described in these terms: knowledge of others depends on my own identity. But this knowledge of the other in turn determines my knowledge of myself . . . new knowledge of the other, new knowledge of the self, and so on. . . . By interacting with the other, my categories have become transformed in a way that they speak for both of us and—why not?—for third parties also. Universality, which I thought I had lost, is rediscovered elsewhere: not in the object but in the project. (p. 15)

Now Todorov is a theorist and literary critic and this may seem hopelessly arcane. Moreover, his "project" is to advance our collective understanding of our many different cultures, not to win a war against insurgents or to respond to an acute humanitarian emergency. My point in citing him is to emphasize that understanding "the other" is no simple task. Most of the time we are lucky if we manage to get halfway through his first

stage. If it is hard for anthropologists and learned scholars genuinely to understand other cultures, it will not be easier for an armed military to do so. The ethical import of this is essentially cautionary: let us beware of assuming we *know* another culture when we have only begun to *encounter* it. Let us not persuade ourselves that we really know the depth of other people's aspirations because we have met a few of them and generalize easily from that encounter.

The broader lesson of this discussion may be to question the strategic and ethical viability of long-term nation-building projects undertaken by our military. This is not to say that the military cannot perform vital missions of humanitarian rescue. I am sure that whatever the longer-term implications, there are many Kosovars, Bosnians, and Libyans who are grateful for the military interventions that saved many lives. But the overall record of long-term military projects of nation-building (whether in Haiti, Iraq, Vietnam, Somalia or Afghanistan, to take only American examples) should lead us to be cautious about claiming ethical vindication for military encounters with other cultures. As a democratic polity, perhaps we should not ask our Soldiers to achieve the impossible. We must remember: ought implies can.

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Chapter 3

The Role of Cross-Cultural Differences in Understanding Systems Thinking

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When observing the actions of others, as well as in their attempts to solve the problems encountered in daily life, people the world over draw upon a variety of thinking strategies or cognitive tools they have previously learned and are comfortable relying upon. Even if all people processed information in the same manner, the specific tools or strategies they would choose to address a given problem would differ depending upon a range of filters brought to bear on the situation: the notion of whether something, is, in fact, really a problem worth trying to fix; which tool or tools are most appropriate in the given circumstance; whether the individual's skill in using the tools is sufficient; and where in their toolkit they will go to draw these tools (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001).

Systems theories purport to explain how fundamental social, economic, and political systems work, as well as how external forces and influences that underlie these systems stimulate change at the macro level. Traditional systems theories are holistic, and as such place minimal focus on the role of the individual. Yet, it is the individual, and for our purposes an individual coming from the outside, who will observe, perceive, interpret, and evaluate a particular social action. The outsider will ultimately act in a manner that either demonstrates accurate judgment, thus leading to a response that is congruent and appropriate in the particular context or circumstances; or, he or she will make an inaccurate assessment and act or direct actions that are inappropriate, potentially jeopardizing individual lives and mission success.

I would like to begin with a story heard not long ago. In this story, a ten-year-old boy is walking home from school with a baseball bat and ball in hand. He stops, throws the ball up in the air, swings, and misses. Seemingly undaunted, he continues on his way, stopping again a few minutes down the road. He throws the ball in the air, cocks his bat, swings, and misses yet again. Unfazed, he picks up the ball as well as his pace. After a few minutes he once again stops, throws the ball high in the air, swings, and again misses, this time proudly calling out, "Strike three! Oh boy! What a great pitcher I'll be someday!" There are many ways one can view an event, and culture plays a key role in determining the perceptual skills one brings to any situation. People, thus, may sometimes not be seeing the same stimulus situation at all—even when their eyes and minds are apparently focused on the same situation.

This paper addresses the notion of culture from the macro or group level as well as the micro or individual level, looking at how the sociocultural system socializes the individual to develop a particular perspective and worldview. It looks briefly at the origins of three major cultural systems—ancient Greek, Chinese and Arab societies—considering how they have influenced a range of cognitive processes and subsequent behavior that is evident today. With this as a background, the paper then considers how individuals socialized within any given group

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may make inaccurate interpretations of another's behavior. Finally, the chapter proposes a few simple strategies individuals may use to acquire an insider's perspective, become better skilled at making accurate judgments of others, and thus be more appropriate in their intercultural encounters and judgments of others.

Culture is an extraordinarily complex concept that takes on different meaning and points of reference to different people, to diverse disciplines, and in varying contexts. In their attempts to make education and training encounters as concrete and practical as possible, scholars, writers, and cross-cultural trainers typically use concrete examples and dichotomies to help explain concepts and illustrate points of reference. Such examples may appear to draw upon stereotypes or may seemingly oversimplify extraordinarily complex concepts and experience. Such dichotomies and examples have pedagogical purpose, however, by providing initial frameworks for the reader to begin to understand the manner in which culture operates in individuals as well as in larger sociocultural groups. Such strategies do not draw upon stereotypes but rather use generalizations that can be supported in the literature to make their point. Generalizations differ from stereotypes in that they represent documented and measured tendencies found to be common among a large sample of a population. Although there are always exceptions to any example one may use in teaching about culture and cultural differences, they nevertheless can be used with some measure of confidence. We can say, for instance, that Iraqis are more collectively oriented as a group than are their more individualistic American counterparts. Although there will be instances when some Iraqis act in an individualistic manner and some Americans demonstrate collective behavior, the majority of Iraqis are oriented toward the collective more often than Americans are. This chapter walks the fine line of using contemporary as well as historical examples to illustrate the concepts discussed and is in no way intended to minimize or oversimplify the notion of culture as it manifests in various peoples.

Defining Culture in the Context of Systems Thinking

People tend to view the world filtered through a lens that has been heavily influenced, since their early childhood, by a variety of cultural forces. Some have likened the influence of culture to that of a computer, referring to it as programming or "software of the mind" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Others have referred to culture as the "dead speaking to the living," where an emphasis is given to the past ideals that are deemed important and that should serve as a guide to present-day behavior (Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989). Triandis (1972) distinguished between objective and subjective culture. Objective or surface-level culture refers to the visible, tangible aspects of people's lives that are easy to observe, describe, and agree upon—products of the hands, so to speak, such as the artifacts people make, the foods they eat, or the clothing worn. Subjective culture, on the other hand, refers to the invisible, less tangible, deeply held perspectives on the world, or the products in the mind: the values people defend, the roles they adopt, or the norms of behavior—things that are much more difficult to observe and understand but that are operating at all times in people's interactions. Oftentimes likened to an iceberg, objective culture is represented by the 10% that is easily seen above the surface of the water. Subjective culture, on the other hand, is the much larger portion that is hidden from view but is more likely to be the source of damage or significant misunderstandings and miscommunication in intercultural interactions. As our interest is focused on the comparisons individuals might make when observing a group or across sociocultural levels of a society, an intentionally broad

definition of culture will be considered. Culture, for our purposes, refers to *structures of meaning shared by individuals in a given time, place or circumstance that help them to define, understand, and explain or otherwise make meaning of the world around them*. Consideration of the various aspects of peoples' subjective culture, how this influences interactions and perceptions across cultures, and how these differences in worldview are derived, will also be examined.

Most individuals living in our modern, global age belong to numerous groups and as such are socialized by multiple and often complex and competing sociocultural systems. Individuals, thus, can be viewed as compilations of multiple cultural identities that can vary within a given individual at different times and in different contexts. National or passport culture, for example, may take precedence and be the more salient and evident expression at times, while religious affiliation, gender, ethnicity, or another source of cultural identity may be dominant at other times.

The role of culture in explaining individual behavior, however, is somewhat different from its role in explaining collective or group behavior. It may be counterintuitive, but the manner in which culture operates at the individual level is more complex and complicated than how it operates at the sociocultural or group level due, in large part, to the potential for individual variation in cultural expression, as well as the possibility of misattribution on the part of the observer. At the group level, culture functions in a more systemic and predictable manner than it does at the level of the individual. That is, culture influences behavioral scripts in the collective in a more consistent and comprehensive manner, thus making it easier to explain social action and social transformation at the deeper national or sociocultural level than at the level of the individual.

Yet, here too, although visible group behavior may appear the same to the outside observer, its cause or impetus may differ. Recent events observed in Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2011 provide an example. Within that year alone, protests, which to the outsider might appear the same, were fueled by different reasons—at first in response to socioeconomic forces and corruption by an elite social class; a few months later as a result of religious tensions between Muslims and Coptic Christians; and later over gender issues that came to a head in response to the brutal beating of the so-called "blue-bra lady." Culture, thus, is dynamic, operating at both the individual and group levels, with differing influences potentially underlying seemingly similar behavior.

There seems to be virtually no limit to the degree to which culture influences people's behavior, from the easily observable objective elements of culture to the more substantial, deeply held subjective differences among people. Researchers have proposed a number of frameworks designed to differentiate cultural dimensions among the world's people (Cushner & Brislin, 1996; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Klein, 2004; Schwartz, 1994, 1999). Among the most researched of all cultural dimensions, and the one thought to underlie the most significant differences among people on Earth, is the degree to which people identify as individualists or collectivists (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Triandis, 1995). The individualism-collectivism dichotomy refers to the degree to which a society reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships (Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

People in individualistic societies are characterized by an emotional independence from groups, organizations, and/or collectives, as opposed to those from collectivist societies "in which people are born into extended families or kinship systems that protect them in exchange for giving them loyalty to the collective" (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996, p. 19). The possible origins of individualism-collectivism in three major sociocultural groups will be considered as one example of culture's influence on individual and group behavior.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, any analysis of culture and its influence on behavior must be approached with caution so as not to overly generalize. Nevertheless, social scientists continue to seek explanations of the origins of present-day actions by looking to our evolutionary past. Archaeologists generally agree that human societies began as small groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers. Among early hunters and gatherers, and continuing in places where farming was slower to develop, nature, rather than other humans, was the primary enemy that had to be controlled. Living under such conditions made the protection of one's animals and storing the spoils from hunting and gathering a priority, thus reinforcing an individualistic orientation.

Somewhere between 10–12,000 years ago, with the advent of agriculture in the warmer climates, people began settling into small farming communities that later evolved to larger settlements, villages, and towns. With this new agrarian lifestyle, a major social transformation took place as people began to put their attention and energy toward managing competition from others for land and animals. Such agricultural (and rural) societies tend to have more complex extended family or village structures, and thus evolved more community or collective groups, oftentimes with one central authority figure typically functioning to maintain order and balance.

Scholars from a number of disciplines have looked at how differential sociocultural organization may have influenced group behavior, and subsequently individual cognitive processing (Berry, 1976; Nakamura, 1964/1985; Needham, 1954; Nisbett et al., 2001; Scarborough, 1998; Whiting & Whiting, 1975; Witkin, 1962; Witkin & Berry, 1975; Zaharna, 2009). Three major cultural groups that lie at the foundation, and still influence many of the today's people, will be considered: the ancient Greeks, the Chinese, and cultures in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region.

Ancient Greeks evolved under geographic conditions that consisted primarily of mountains descending to the sea and were better suited to herding and fishing than farming. Such food-gathering techniques were better accomplished by small groups or nuclear families. Rather unique to the ancient Greeks was the place of power in the individual, with ordinary people developing a sense of independence and individuality. Associated with this sense of personal freedom was the tradition of debate, established as early as the eighth century BCE when Homer emphasized that next to being a capable warrior, the most important skill for a man to have was being able to debate others. Ordinary people were encouraged to debate in public spaces such as the marketplace (Cromer, 1993). Ancient Greeks also encouraged individual initiative, inquiry, and a curiosity about life around them, as well as a belief that the world could be understood by discovering how it worked, thus facilitating growth and development in such fields as physics, formal logic, natural history and philosophy. Individualism, inquiry, and initiative were thus at the foundation of Western culture.

Ancient China, on the other hand, was agrarian in origin, and thus demanded a significant amount of cooperation between and among community members in order to carry out many of the economic activities in an effective way, especially when farming rice in the south of China. Chinese society was complex and hierarchical, and organized at the level of the large state very early on, with the king, and later the emperor and the bureaucracy, controlling many factors in the lives of the individual Chinese. The emphasis on harmony in social order, so central and essential in Chinese society was, thus, evident in the beginnings of this collectivist society.

Although valued and supported in Greek society, any confrontation, including debate, was discouraged in Chinese society, believing that it would upset social relations. In a similar contrast to Greek society, the Chinese approached the natural world through intuition and empiricism, not through individual inquiry or the use of formal models. Some believe that the Chinese never developed a concept corresponding to the laws of nature for the very reason that they did not have a concept of nature as distinct from human or spiritual entities (Nisbett et al., 2001).

The roots of pre-Islamic Arabic culture across the Middle East and North African (MENA) region are thought to emanate from Bedouin nomadic tribes, each of which was headed by a sheik elected by the tribe's dominant family. Similar to ancient Chinese social order, authority among Bedouin tribes was highly patriarchal and hierarchical, with the sheik responsible for looking after the needs of widows, orphans, and the poor. The extended family was the basic social and economic unit, with the entire family being accountable for the conduct and obligations of its members. Parents sacrificed for their children, and in return expected to be cared for by them in their old age.

The beginnings of a collective orientation in Arab society can be found here. With large networks of affiliation and obligation being the norm, agreements tended to be informal and based on strong feelings of belonging, trust, and loyalty to family and tribe, as opposed to contractually between individuals. Later, Islamic Law required individual interests to be subordinate to that of the collective public interest. Ties to kinship and tribe, combined with a distrust of outsiders, predominate, with the world often divided into family and others, making it difficult to gain trust and conduct business with those not considered part of the in-group. The intense, personal nature of relationships makes developing and maintaining relationships with others an essential part of doing most anything across MENA societies.

The consequences of being socialized within a particular sociocultural framework are far-reaching and broad in scope. China and other Eastern Asian societies with historical and cultural roots emanating from China, as well as most societies in the MENA region, remain relatively collectivist in orientation. The United States and other societies whose roots can be found in ancient Greece tend to be more individualist in orientation, with the United States, according to Hofstede's data (1980), being identified as the most highly individualistic society on the planet. There is substantial evidence that the sociocultural differences that characterized ancient Greece, China, and the MENA region continue to influence many important aspects of people's lives today. Two areas—cognitive style, or the manner in which people process information, and ways in which people interact in a range of social and business settings—will be considered.

Among the most common cognitive style differences identified in the literature is that between analytic and holistic thinking (Nisbett et al., 2001). An analytic cognitive style involves comprehending something by understanding its component parts, focusing on a relatively narrow visual field, following a rule-based categorization of objects, attributing another's motivation and behavior to a personal trait, and the use of formal logic in reasoning. In contrast, a holistic cognitive style is characterized by focusing on large-scale patterns that are grounded in experience, following a more thematic and group-based categorization of objects, focusing on contextual information and relationships in the visual field, emphasizing a situational cause in attribution, and dialecticism.

What seems to be common among the various discrete aspects of the analytic style is an emphasis on a single dimension or element—whether in categorizing objects or evaluating arguments. With this comes a tendency to separate phenomena from the contexts in which they are embedded, thus focusing on the individual elements as causal agents or attending to focal objects in visual scenes. What is common among the elements of the holistic style is the greater attention and important role that the surrounding context and relationships have in visual attention, in categorizing objects, and in explaining social behavior (Varnum, Grossman, Kitayama & Nisbett, 2010).

A related consequence of a holistic versus an analytic cognitive pattern is attention given to the field, or what becomes the central area of focus. If one lives in a complex social world with many interpersonal relationships, one's attention is likely to be directed outside oneself and toward the social field. Attention to the field fosters an attempt to understand relations among objects and events. Thus, the world might naturally seem continuous to people who view themselves as part of a larger whole and who are motivated to maintain harmony. Such an orientation has been termed field-dependence. On the other hand, if one lives in a world with fewer and less significant social relations and role constraints, it may be possible to attend primarily to the object and one's goals with respect to it. Such an orientation is referred to as field-independence.

Evidence supports the notion that people in some cultures attend to a much wider range of events simultaneously, have stronger social networks and more of a collective orientation, resulting in a more holistic and field-dependent orientation to the world (Rogoff, 1990; Witkin & Berry, 1975; Witkin & Goodenough, 1977). Hunters, herders, and industrialized peoples tend to be more analytic and field-independent, for instance, than farmers in a number of societies. Similarly, Orthodox Jewish boys, whose families and communities require strict observance of a variety of social rules, have been found to be more field-dependent than secular Jewish boys, who in turn were more field-dependent than Protestant boys.

Several implications and hypotheses follow from this, as is evident in both the research literature as well as in everyday life. For instance, Easterners might be expected to see relationships among discrete elements in the whole while Westerners might be more inclined to focus on individual elements. Masuda and Nisbett (2001) investigated this by presenting animated scenes of fish and other underwater objects to both Japanese and American subjects, asking them to report what they observed. Americans more often mentioned the individual fish first (e.g., the small fish swimming to the right) while their Japanese counterparts more often

referred to background elements (e.g., the underwater rocks or plant life was predominant). Although Americans and Japanese were equally likely to mention details about the fish, Japanese participants made significantly more statements about background aspects of the environment (about 70% more) and nearly double the number of statements concerning relations involving inanimate aspects of the environment (e.g., the black fish swimming by the rock).

In similar eye-tracking studies, while Americans tended to focus their attention and judge the emotions of one central figure when judging an event such as a crowd, Japanese were more likely to look at the faces of an entire group of people and to take this information into consideration when making judgments about others (Masuda, Ellsworth, Mesquita, Leu, Tanida & van de Veerdonk, 2008). This suggests that Japanese follow a holistic rule, believing that in order to accurately judge an event, its relation to objects in the context must be taken into account. Americans, on the other hand, did not find the contextual information to be as important, as judged by the patterns of their eye movements, nor did they take others' emotions into consideration when judging the emotions of the central figure. Thus, these eye-tracking experiments lend support to the idea that Americans may focus more on individual objects than do East Asians, supporting the notion that cultural experience may, in fact, influence our visual perception of the world around us, thus determining to a large extent what we see.

Other evidence supporting the influence of holistic or analytic cognitive processing on behavior has been summarized by Nisbett et al. (2001):

- The West pioneered and continues to develop uniform, atomistic, and interchangeable design and production, going back to Henry Ford's production line and extending to the fast-food chain restaurants of today (Shore, 1996).

- Employees in the top corporations in Japan are frequently rotated among their company's divisions in order to see the company's operations from as many viewpoints as possible (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993).

- The practice of feng shui for choosing building sites in Asia suggests that the factors affecting major decisions and their outcomes are extraordinarily complex, interrelated, and in turn encourage searching for relationships in the field. This may be contrasted with more atomistic and rule-based approaches to problem-solving that are characteristic in the West (Hong, Morris, Chiu & Benet-Martinez, 2000).

- The most popular game among intellectuals in the West is chess, while the most popular in the East is Go. Go is much more complex and holistic than chess, with the board having 19 x 19 spaces, in contrast to the chessboard having only 8 x 8 spaces. Go pieces have more variation in possible moves than do chess pieces, which must adhere to a fixed set of rules for movement. Hence moves in Go are more difficult to predict (Xia, 1997).

- Languages spoken in East Asia as well as in the MENA region are extraordinarily contextual. Because of their multiple meanings and the minimal nature of syntax in Sinitic (Chinese-based) languages, words must be understood in the context of sentences (Freeman & Habermann, 1996). Among Arabic speakers, modifying pronunciation, vocabulary, and the idioms used in one's speech demonstrates an

awareness and sensitivity to the other person's religious affiliation, historical tensions, and alliances (Zaharna, 2009). In contrast, middle-class American parents try to decontextualize words by making them understandable and independent of verbal or situational contexts when teaching languages to children (Heath, 1982).

We might thus expect that if Americans attend to the object more, and if they believe that they understand the rules influencing an object's behavior, they might be more likely to look for one particular cause or source of a problem rather than considering the larger context in which it occurs. The belief that one knows the rules governing an object's behavior might encourage exclusive focus on the object for explanation as well as the belief that the world can be controlled through one's independent actions. American actions against Al-Qaeda, for instance, or at least those that are reported in the media, seem to center on attacks that take out individual members thought to be influential in the organization, as opposed to looking at understanding and influencing the ideologies of the larger social groups in the region.

An emphasis on holistic thinking implies that the notion and acceptance of change, contradiction, and the need for multiple perspectives might ultimately lead to a search for a compromise between opposing points of view. Assuming that harmony remains fundamental in social relations in the East and the MENA region, and if social needs influence cognitive orientations, people whose social existence is based on harmony would not be expected to have developed a tradition of confrontation or debate that flourished in Greece and later in the West. We might also find evidence that Asians tend to seek compromise solutions to problems, to prefer arguments based on principles of holism and continuity, and to try to reconcile or transcend seeming contradictions rather than to seek to reject one or both of two propositions that could be construed as contradicting one another. In place of formal logic and debate, the Chinese developed a dialectic that involves reconciling, transcending, or even accepting apparent contradictions. In the spirit of Tao or the principle of yin and yang, two parties in a quarrel can both be right, or at least two opposing propositions can both contain some element of truth. Greeks, on the other hand, favored logic, visible proof, and abstract principles, and rejected the evidence of the senses and emotions.

Other evidence to support these observations includes:

- East Asians strive to maintain harmony with greater regularly than Americans. When asked how they dealt with conflict with their fellow managers, three times as many Americans as Japanese reported trying to use persuasion while twice as many Japanese reported using avoidance as a means of dealing with a conflict of views (Ohbuchi & Takahasi, 1994).

- Japanese decision-making processes in corporate and organizational boardrooms are often nothing more than endorsements of previously agreed-upon decisions designed to avoid potential open conflicts (Nisbett et al., 2001).

- While historically the ancient Chinese had a complex legal system, it was not codified to the same extent nor in the same way as it was in the West; still today, courts are relatively rare (Logan, 1986). Solving conflicts by negotiation with the assistance of a middleman, as opposed to through the courts, is preferred.

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- Easterners and Westerners have significantly different understandings of the nature of contracts, which often results in conflict between parties. In the West, a contract is unalterable, whereas in the East a contract is continually renegotiable in the light of changed circumstances (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993).

It is not uncommon for people to simply ignore the role and impact of culture in everyday life, primarily because it is often taken for granted, remains hidden from the individual actors, and as a result, is not often spoken nor thought about (Cushner & Trifonovitch, 1989). As discussed above, people socialized into any sociocultural system develop a distinct worldview and learn a particular way of viewing, perceiving, and interacting within the world. They also have their own explanations about the motivations of other people and make judgments about another's character based on an interpretation of the behavior they observe. Psychologists refer to these judgments as attributions. People tend to make attributions about others rather quickly—often within a few seconds, based on the behavior they observe.

Two individuals can perceive a behavior in the same manner yet interpret it very differently, or conversely, they can observe different behavior yet make a similar judgment, in both cases making inaccurate attributions about the other. In the eyes of urban or suburban Americans, for example, a Micronesian villager who would walk over to the water's edge, block a nostril, blow their nose toward the water, wipe their nose with their hand, and then rinse their hand in the water would most probably be seen as disgusting, gross, and unhealthy. In the eyes of the Micronesian villager, the urban or suburban American who blows their nose in a tissue or handkerchief then puts it in their pocket, carries it around all day, and perhaps even washes the handkerchief with other clothes, would likewise be seen as disgusting, gross, and unhealthy. These types of divergent perceptions arise because these two groups possess distinctly different standards of comparison. That is, although the two groups may perceive the behavior identically in absolute terms, they may interpret it differently in relative terms because of their use of different standards of comparison. They then make attributions about the other based upon their interpretations of the behavior they observe—in this case, judging them to be dirty or perhaps lesser human beings.

There are a few errors in human thinking. One of them, the fundamental attribution error (FAE), refers to the tendency people have to judge others in a manner that is different from the way in which they would judge themselves (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Ross, 1977). If I fail at a given task, for instance, I am likely to look for an explanation outside of myself, in the situation or context: I was sick, there were too many external pressures that prevented me from putting my full attention to the task, and so on. When observing another person fail at a given task, people are more likely to place a trait or dispositional label on that person—they did not succeed because they did not try hard enough or they were not smart enough.

People also have a need to simplify the world around them, grouping similar aspects of their environment into groups or categories that share common traits or characteristics. People then respond to the category, not the individual elements or examples within that group. People also have best exemplars that come to mind when they think of a particular category. Thus, all representatives of the category "birds" share such common features as lighter or hollow bones, feathers, beaks, and so forth. When asked to think of a bird, the exemplar or common image that

comes to mind for most Americans is something about 8-9 inches in length, perhaps brown in color that is often seen flying around neighborhoods and parks—something akin to the robin or sparrow. Most people do not think of a penguin, a turkey, or an ostrich, even though each of these birds share the same common attributes that all birds do.

Stereotypes are merely categories of people that are similarly utilized to simplify thinking. They become problematic when the negative trait label that may result from a misattribution is then applied to all representatives of a particular group of people, thus blurring the differences between the individual members. The attributions made of others, thus, may or may not be accurate, depending on the extent to which the observer has accurate knowledge and understanding of the reasons or motivations behind the other's behavior.

One of the major goals of good cross-cultural training is for people to make isomorphic attributions—that is, judgments about others that are similar to the judgments they would make about themselves. Thinking back to the example of the Micronesian and American blowing their nose: rather than judging each other as dirty or disgusting, each would understand that it is simply the common way the other has learned to blow their nose and thus would avoid making negative judgments about the other.

With the above as an overview of major sociocultural influences and how they impact present-day behavior, we can pose some hypotheses as to how individuals from opposing cultures may perceive, and then respond to, behaviors they observe in others. If collectivists believe that many factors may influence the outcome of events and thus have a tendency to consider the entire context as relevant when finding meaning and making judgments, it follows that their explanations or attributions should involve situational factors more frequently than do those of more individualistic Americans. Collectivists, thus, should be expected to consider both social and physical elements of an event, taking into consideration the field—that is, attending to the contexts and situations more than Americans. They might also be less surprised by any given outcome because of their ready ability to find some explanation for it in the entire context of potentially relevant factors. This might help to explain the frequent reference or recitation to God's intervention, or N'Shallah, that is frequently heard throughout the MENA region, as one possible explanation of events to attribute cause to something outside oneself. Americans, alternatively, would more likely look for an explanation of an event with a specific target or cause in mind while seeking to best understand its unique properties.

The fundamental attribution error might indeed be more characteristic of Western culture than of others. Miller (1984) found that Americans explained another person's behavior predominantly in terms of individual traits (e.g., recklessness or kindness), while Hindu Indians explained similar behaviors in terms of social roles, obligations, the physical environment, and other contextual factors. Lee, Hallahan, and Herzog (1996) found that while sports writers in the United States preferred explanations involving the dispositions of individual team members, those in Hong Kong focused on contextual explanations of sports events. Similarly, Morris and Peng (1994) demonstrated that when Americans explained events such as mass murders, they focused almost solely on the presumed mental instability and other negative dispositions of the individual murderers, whereas Chinese accounts of the same events attributed cause to situational, contextual, and even societal factors that might have been at work.

Acts of violence committed by individuals or groups can be interpreted differently depending upon the point of view of the observers. Lee, Takaku, Ottati, and Yan (2004) found that although Americans, Chinese, and Pakistanis were all in agreement on what they observed on September 11 (that is, the numbers of people killed, description of the events leading to their deaths), their interpretation of the events were quite divergent. From the perspective of the Americans, the events of September 11 were viewed as an act of terrorism. The perception of Pakistanis in this study, however, was that the same event was as an act of heroism. Thus, a given behavior that all perceive in the same manner can elicit divergent attributions and interpretations that are virtually opposite in meaning. Similarly, when asked who was responsible for the events of September 11, Americans were more likely to identify a single target (Muslim extremists) while Chinese and Pakistani participants were more likely to attribute blame to a wide range of circumstances (the U.S. presence in the Middle East, the festering Palestinian dilemma), and to believe that all parties share some of the responsibility. Divergence of interpretation is also apparent when considering the U.S. response to the September 11 attacks. Throughout the United States, Europe, and elsewhere in the West, many viewed the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan as a justified act of retribution and a heroic means of preventing future terrorism, while elsewhere it was perceived as an unjustified act of aggression.

Culture learning is complicated as well as complex, in part because the important subjective aspects of culture are generally hidden from consciousness. While there is a growing body of knowledge that informs us about the role culture plays in many aspects of our lives, the simple act of acquiring this knowledge does little to facilitate people's ability to communicate better, interact more effectively, or enjoy their intercultural interactions. People just do not become more cross-culturally effective through a cognitive-only approach to learning (e.g., reading, listening to lectures). Rather, they must engage their emotions, and as much as possible interact with others different from themselves if they are to become more effective interacting across cultures.

But even among those not able to commit to long-term immersion or interaction with others, there are still steps that can be taken to facilitate one's sensitivities, skills, and abilities. Although not the focus of this particular chapter, the applied fields of cross-cultural or intercultural training can help people to better understand the emotional responses they are likely to encounter in intercultural interactions, to communicate more effectively both verbally and nonverbally with others, as well as to develop the skills needed to learn to perceive others from an insider's perspective and thus make isomorphic attributions (Cushner & Brislin, 1996). People, thus, would be well advised to consider participating in some structured experiences designed to enhance their cross-cultural skills.

Cultural messages come to each of us filtered through multiple sources, beginning with one's immediate and extended family, and later through our places of worship, schooling, the various communities to which we belong, the media, and so forth. In the past, these messages were relatively few, simple, and rather consistent or homogeneous. In today's global arena, the messages received are many and ubiquitous, are delivered and filtered through multiple sources, and are oftentimes in conflict with one another. Nonetheless, we all receive messages through a cultural filter, and as such must understand how this influences our perspective and worldview, as well as understanding what meaning others are making about a similar event.

Many Americans, for instance, choose to receive daily news from a few rather narrowly focused media outlets that typically support their perspective or worldview, essentially receiving the same message from multiple sources. This, then, becomes their understanding of how the world operates. Whether they are avid followers of the Time/CNN brand, FOX News, NPR, PBS or MSNBC (or any other source, for that matter), the messages tend to be rather similar in orientation and content. The messages and perspectives held by the sociocultural group we think of when we say Americans are, in most respects, similar. It is, in part, what binds us as a nation.

The same can be said for other sociocultural groups. The majority of people throughout the MENA region (or any other region, for that matter) are also influenced by rather homogeneous cultural messages and media inputs that reflect a common message that both shapes as well as supports a widespread way of thinking. Their preferred choice of media outlet, however, might very well be the Al-Jazeera network, which transmits its particular messages and perspectives. Likewise, Chinese news sources present a perspective that is not equally shared outside of China. Thus, at the macro level, large groups of people share what to them is common knowledge. It just very well may be different from the common knowledge held by others from outside.

People are indoctrinated throughout their entire lives with certain traditions, ideas, and ways of viewing the world. We must work hard to understand both how we have come to comprehend our world, as well as how others interpret or make sense of the world from their perspective. It takes quite a bit of cognitive energy to force oneself to listen to and try to understand alternative points of view and to continually ask what else may be going on. But this may be exactly what is needed in order to better understand the differing and multiple perspectives held by others. It thus may become the responsibility of the outsider to work to broaden their perspective and point of view in order to become more knowledgeable and open to alternative perspectives and worldviews. While regular interaction with people from other cultures would be a preferred way to enhance one's understanding of difference, finding other ways to gain an insider's perspective (e.g., becoming regular consumers of other news sources, studying the game of Go, studying cross-cultural communication) can at least offer a place to begin to understand the perspective and worldview of "the other."

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Chapter 4

Reducing the Biases that Blind Us to Appreciating Sociocultural Systems[6]

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U.S. Army personnel on the ground in Afghanistan have just been charged with improving the infrastructure of a small village. To that end, they discuss with village leaders the importance of a reliable clean water source. Army personnel have been watching the local women trudge five km to a nearby stream every morning to retrieve water, of questionable quality. The village leaders have agreed that a reliable clean water source would be beneficial. Fortunately the water table is relative high in the center of town and thus the personnel begin construction of a well. Army personnel are particularly pleased as this source will not only provide reliable water, it will do so much more efficiently, thereby lightening the burden for village women. Shortly after construction begins, however, the well is subject to sabotage. Holes get refilled; materials go missing. Army personnel then set up a watch and come to discover it is the village women, themselves, who are committing such sabotage. Why is this happening? Upon further investigation it comes to light that the women actually cherish their daily walk to the river to get water—they enjoy getting out and relish in their free time to be with each other, sharing stories and discussing common family issues. As they see it, putting the well in the center of town does nothing to decrease their work load—only shift their time from a pleasant walk with friends, sharing information, to other chores.[7]

This story (based on an incident reported in Benedict, 2009) is just one small illustration of how the mandate of the U.S. Army has expanded in the last decade. Personnel on the ground are moving beyond their prior goals of winning conflicts and securing peace to actually stabilizing countries, providing infrastructure support, and putting areas on a forward path toward development. As this anecdote, relayed by Army personnel, suggests, this mandate that includes reconstruction and nation-building is not only large in scope but complex in implementation. Ideas for how to (re)build basic infrastructures require an understanding of the current sociocultural system in which any practice, behavior, norm, or institution is embedded. And though there may be some obvious steps to take in trying to implement any activities, such as being sure to open a dialogue with existing local authority figures (in this story, the village leaders), there may be some additional non-obvious steps that personnel might need to take before beginning any activity. Here, the building of the well failed not because the village did not want a clean reliable water source, but rather because the project's advisors were blind to an existing sociocultural artifact (the women's social network) that was deeply cherished by members, as well as the sociocultural practices that supported the network and thus the

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[7] See also http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/10/untold-war-stories/# and http://www.thenation.com/print/article/155623/woman-woman-afghanistan

sociocultural system (women's opportunity to get away from other obligations, socialize while walking, and share critical inter-family information). When the Army inadvertently removed women's opportunity to engage in practices that supported the sociocultural system, personnel experienced a backlash, wasting short-term funding and possibly, in the longer term, damaging their reputation as "the good guys."

Winning the hearts and minds of local populations naturally means understanding the sociocultural system in which these populations are embedded. In the first section below we explore this connection more explicitly. Yet even when this connection is readily acknowledged, people may still fail to appreciate the power of culture's influence. Thus in the following sections we explore why it is easy to overlook sociocultural dynamics. We review research on those cognitive biases (or blind spots in how we process information) that lead us to either ignore sociocultural forces or underestimate their impact. In the final section we offer some (albeit limited) strategies for reducing biased judgment, which may help our diagnosis of, and appreciation for, sociocultural systems.

Understanding a Situation

In order to make sense of any stimuli we observe (a person's behavior, an event, a series of events, a social gathering), we rely on our stored knowledge. Because of limited information processing capabilities of the human brain, this knowledge is structured into what is often called "schemata" (Bartlett, 1932). A cognitive schema is simply the vast reservoir of information that people have learned over time through formal teaching, informal storytelling, or personal experience. The function of a schema is to help us interpret current stimuli that we observe or hear about (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Neisser, 1967; Rumelhart, 1980). It gives us a foundation for knowing what a behavior means (we know that a driver pulling up to a gas pump is likely to be low on gas) or knowing the implication of a particular set of activities (we know that shopping in December likely means that people are buying presents for others, rather than items for themselves).

Military manuals acknowledge the critical interpretative role of someone's cognitive schemata. For example, the U.S. Marine Corps Manual on Intelligence (U.S. Marine Corps, 1997) advocates the importance of turning basic information and data (i.e., stimuli that are observed, events that are relayed by others) into *viable knowledge* about a situation. What is useful to military planners, and the executors of those plans, is what might be called practical intelligence, which is instantiated in the ability to *give meaning to pieces of gathered information.* In an ideal world, practical intelligence would provide an accurate schematic mental model so that others might correctly interpret the meaning of a particular set of behaviors or events, and then be able to apply that schematic model to other future stimuli.

On the other hand, having a flawed schematic model can result in failure to interpret a situation, such as in the opening vignette where personnel failed to interpret the water gathering as an important social connectivity practice. This flawed schematic model can lead people to collect irrelevant data (such as the energy expended walking to the river), to misinterpret data (that the distance traveled is more important than the time spent exchanging information), and

hence to make poor decisions about the best strategic course of action (a proposal for a well in the center of town).

The accuracy of someone's schematic model comes directly from their awareness of the sociocultural system in which the stimuli they are observing are embedded (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In other words, Army personnel quite naturally saw the water gathering activity as a tiresome chore for the women. This interpretation was natural for personnel because it was filtered through their own lens (schematic model) for what the behavior would imply if done in their society. Developing sociocultural awareness means understanding the meaning of behaviors and events *as locals might understand their meaning*. To develop this sociocultural awareness requires understanding a bit of theory about what constitutes a sociocultural system and then understanding the cognitive blind spots that we all have that serve as barriers to understanding the nature and power of others' sociocultural system (i.e., a system in which we are not extensively socialized, having not been raised there from childhood).

Sociocultural Systems: A Macro Approach to the Importance of Culture

A sociocultural system can be viewed as a set of interrelated patterns, or dimensions, that come together to form the unique social identity of the group (Deutsch, 1973). These cultural dimensions are adjectives that characterize the nature of that social group. For example, a group can be said to be individualistic or collectivistic, to be hierarchical or egalitarian. These dimensions can be operationalized and measured (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1992), but the important thing to remember is that these measures are not any sort of absolute score but rather relative measures of one cultural group versus another. In this way, cultural groups have been rather systematically differentiated from each other, whereby each group has its own pattern of relative characteristics.

These characteristics can manifest themselves at both the micro level (in individual thoughts and behaviors) and at the macro level (in institutional rules, behavioral norms, or social systems; Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995). For example, members of a cultural group can espouse individualistic values (concerns for the self above the collective) or collective values (concerns for the group above the self). A behavioral norm could also reflect individualism (such as the U.S. classroom norm of cold calling individuals to participate in class discussion) or it can reflect collectivism (such as the Chinese classroom practice of working in groups). As well, a societal system can be said to reflect individualism (such as the U.S. patent system that protects individual inventors for 17 years) or collectivism (such as the Japanese patent system that protects an inventor for less time and allows others to build on that invention; Tinsley, Curhan, & Kwok, 1999).

For U.S. personnel entering into a different sociocultural system from their own, it is important to understand both how their own individual thoughts are culturally constituted (meaning derived from their native cultural socialization) as well as how others' individual thoughts and social systems may be differently culturally constituted. To navigate successfully in another sociocultural terrain requires moving beyond managing relationships with the individuals of other cultures or honing one's ability to persuade them. It requires actually appreciating the patterns and characteristics of the sociocultural system in which these others are embedded and

how existing institutional structures both reflect and reinforce the sociocultural system as a whole. This level of sociocultural awareness increases the chances that any suggested changes will actually be improvements over existing activities and that these suggestions will be embraced by local populations. Changes that are inconsistent with existing institutional structures and practices will be much more difficult to implement successfully.

Unfortunately, there are a few well-known cognitive biases that blind us to either the importance of others' sociocultural systems or to an accurate understanding of others' sociocultural systems. By accurate understanding, we mean an awareness of the pattern of dimensions that might characterize the group of people, and how existing behaviors and institutions might reinforce the pattern. In the following section we delineate three ways in which U.S. military personnel might fail to develop sociocultural awareness and then proceed to explain the cognitive biases that can lead to these failures.

How Might Failure in Sociocultural Awareness Occur?

Returning to our opening vignette, we detail three specific possibilities in which U.S. military personnel might fail to see sociocultural systems or appreciate the extent to which institutional practices and individual behaviors might be reflections of that system.

First, there is often a tendency to reduce most behaviors of others as being a product of that individual rather than as a manifestation of a broader sociocultural system. In general, individual-level variation within a culture exists as to how much and when any particular member embraces and reflects the cultural characteristics. For example, not all Americans[8] espouse highly individualistic goals; rather, there is within-group variation, and some Americans are quite collective in their behavior. Moreover, Americans are not always individualistic, as in some situations the pursuit of self-interest becomes secondary to self-sacrifice. At times and under some conditions another person's thoughts or behaviors are simply a product of that individual and unassociated with any higher-level cultural structure. That is, cultural characteristics can be manifested in an individual's values but not all values a person has are a manifestation of an underlying cultural dimension of the group. Despite this fact and although one must be aware of individual variation, people tend to over-attribute others' behavior to their personality rather than understanding how it could be socioculturally driven. Returning to the opening vignette, this tendency might be seen if the Army personnel noticed the Afghan women's discussions as they walk to get water, but did not tie this conversing to any larger sociocultural system. They discounted the behavior if they failed to note that talking was more than simply polite conversation but had an important role to play in connecting knowledge across households.

A second possibility is that U.S. military personnel might understand that someone's particular behavior is the byproduct of a higher-level system, but they may fail to attach an accurate interpretation to the behavior to understand how it supports the larger society. That is, someone outside the sociocultural system may understand that a behavior has importance (beyond a simple interpretation of the activity) but fail to grasp the specific nature of its

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[8] The term "Americans" is used in this chapter to refer to those from the United States.

importance. Returning to the opening vignette, this tendency might be seen if the Army personnel correctly interpret discussion during the walk to the well as more than incidental conversation, but err in thinking it is simply leisure socializing that could be done at another time—particularly if the proposed well frees these women from having to walk five km to the stream. That is, they see the conversation as more than just talk but fail to see its role in knitting the broader social fabric together.

A third possibility is that U.S. military personnel might understand that someone's particular behavior is the byproduct of a higher-level system and may accurately interpret the behavior's role in supporting the larger sociocultural system, but fail to appreciate how difficult change might be. Social systems are slow to evolve and tend toward inertia, in part because people embedded in the system are averse to the uncertainty of change (Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004) and in part because of the complexity of a system's institutions, norms, and practices, which all reinforce each other (Gould, 1992). Returning to the opening vignette, this tendency to underestimate the power of the cultural system might be seen if the Army personnel correctly interpret the walk to the well as inter-family knowledge exchange, but fail to understand how critical this activity is to the cohesiveness of the village itself. In a society where women's chores are virtually endless, the walk to the stream provides a culturally sanctioned time and place for an informal inter-family dialogue. But without the walk, the dialogue may not take place, as women will be busy with other activities. Thus the practice that helps hold the sociocultural system together is essentially non-substitutable.

Thus, there are three ways in which U.S. military personnel might evince sub-optimal sociocultural awareness. First, personnel might fail to recognize the behavior as a manifestation of a sociocultural system. Second, personnel could fail to identify the system correctly. Third, personnel could fail to appreciate the strength of the system and the non-substitutability of a practice. These are all, themselves, products of naturally occurring cognitive biases. In the next section, we identify some of the possible biases that may hinder our sociocultural awareness and thus hamper our judgment in an intercultural context.

Why Might Failure in Sociocultural Awareness Occur?

Researchers have identified a number of cognitive biases that affect our judgment and decision-making. Four are particularly applicable to hindering sociocultural awareness and thus optimal decision-making when trying to advise across an intercultural divide.

The Fundamental Attribution Error

The Fundamental Attribution Error is the tendency to overestimate the role of personal attributes and underestimate the role of situational factors in another person's behavior (Ross, 1977). For example, if an observer sees many people standing in line to go through airport security and then sees a target (Bill) trying to jump one of the lane ropes and advance out of turn to the front of the line, the observer is likely to think Bill is obnoxious or arrogant or self-important and unlikely to consider that Bill may be urgently late for his plane. Moreover, if the observer is generous enough to consider that Bill may be urgently late for his plane, that observer is likely to further reason that Bill is irresponsible or incompetent and would be unlikely to

consider that there was a major car crash on the highway leading to the airport and that Bill was unfortunate enough to be stuck in the middle. The tendency, thus, is for the observer to make a "dispositional" attribution for Bill's behavior (it is some internal characteristic of the individual) rather than a "situational" attribution for Bill's behavior (see it is as a byproduct of a larger complex system in which he is embedded).

There is likely to be a direct mapping between this cognitive error and a failure of U.S. military personnel to understand that an individual's behavior is the byproduct of a larger cultural system. The nature of this fundamental attribution error is that observers infer the cause of someone's behavior to that person's internal disposition rather than to anything larger or external to the individual (such as a larger sociocultural system in which the individual is embedded). Hence it may be completely natural for U.S. military observers to mistake the behavior they see as manifestations of individual rather than cultural characteristics. As a side note, there is some research that shows that Americans, being socialized in a highly individualistic culture, are more prone to making this fundamental attribution error than are others who have been socialized in more collective cultures (Morris & Peng, 1994). Thus, this may be particularly acute for U.S. forces, rather than those from more collective cultures.

There are of course factors that attenuate the fundamental attribution error (Kelley, 1967)—one of which is the consistency of the actor's behavior across time (is Bill chronically late to the airport?) and across contexts (is Bill chronically late to other appointments?). To the extent that Bill's behavior is inconsistent across time and contexts, the observer is less likely to attribute Bill's behavior to his disposition (a personality characteristic of Bill) and more likely to attribute it to an external cause. However, because sociocultural systems tend to have a coherent influence on individual members' behavior, member behavior is likely to appear consistent to observers biasing them toward dispositional attributions. Returning to our opening vignette, the fundamental attribution error would predispose any U.S. personnel toward discounting any sociocultural meaning attached to the walk to the stream and simply believing this is an artifact of an inefficient water-gathering system.

Bias Blind Spot

The term "bias blind spot" refers to the tendency to deny the presence of biases in one's own perceptions and judgments, even while acknowledging the existence of biases in others' thought processes (Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002). It results in an acute failure to appreciate that one has a subjective mental model or schematic interpretation of the world and an assumption that one's perceptions and interpretations are not a model at all but are reality. Underlying the bias blind spot is the fact that most cognitive biases operate at the subconscious level, out of conscious awareness. As a result individuals presume their perceptions and judgments offer direct, unbiased contact with the world (Ehrlinger, Gilovich, & Ross, 2005; Pronin et al., 2002).

This presumption that one's own thought processes are objective—what is sometimes termed "naïve realism" (Griffin & Ross, 1991)—suggests that U.S. personnel operating in other cultures may fail to realize when their interpretations of others' behavior is inaccurate. Returning to the opening vignette, a U.S. advisor suffering from bias blind spot might understand the water gathering discussions are more than idle conversation but might not understand how they are tied

to a greater sociocultural system of gendered labor, roles, and responsibilities. The advisor might then discount the backlash that could occur with any changes to this sociocultural fabric of life.

Although a bias blind spot can be triggered by virtually any sense-making or judgment situation (Pronin et al., 2002), it is more likely to occur when one is in a foreign sociocultural setting. In a foreign system, one might recognize differences (in thoughts, actions, and decisions) between oneself and others. Yet, what bias blind spot does is encourage people to account for these differences by simply recognizing that others suffer from bias, while failing to acknowledge any biases in one's own thought processes. In fact, there is another bias, called "exaggeration of conflict," which is the tendency to enhance the distance between one's own values and those of members from other groups (Thompson, Nadler, & Lount, 2006). By exaggerating the differences between one's own values and those of other groups, people tend to enhance the beliefs that these other groups are less reasonable. Thus, bias blind spot (and the related exaggeration of conflict bias) should encourage a self-serving judgment in the accuracy of one's beliefs about what others' behavior means or in the usefulness of one's own decisions about courses of actions (such as a well in the center of town).

Projection

The term "projection" is used to explain the biased tendency to assume that others share one's current emotional states, attitudes, or beliefs (Robbins & Krueger, 2005). When one is affected by the projection bias, one is aware of having a schematic model that interprets stimuli, and perhaps even that it is subjective, but assumes that the other actor or group will share this same world view. Projection is driven by egocentrism. It arises because one's own internal states (emotions, attitudes) serve as a focal point by which to imagine others' states (Robbins & Krueger, 2005).

Given this underlying mechanism, levels of projection depend on how similar to ourselves we perceive others to be. Robbins and Krueger's review of projection revealed it to be significantly less prevalent, almost non-existent, in judgments of out-group members ("different" others) compared to in-group members ("similar" others). The projection bias is amplified, on the other hand, as familiarity with the stimulus increases, or when a need for social connectedness is activated.

Therefore, the effects of projection on sociocultural awareness will depend on how much the U.S. military personnel feels familiar and identifies with the foreign culture. If he or she feels familiar with the new culture, s/he is more likely to believe s/he understands any sociocultural meaning attached to observed behavior. This perception does not necessarily map onto reality— that is, s/he may have a surface understanding of the behavior, which means s/he could either fail to identify the complete meaning and implication of a behavior or fail to appreciate the strength of the sociocultural system. Returning to our opening vignette, projection would make it more likely that a U.S. military advisor who has been posted to Afghanistan for a year might recognize the conversation during the hike to the stream as enabling important knowledge exchange but fail to see its relationship to supporting the broader sociocultural system. The advisor might reason that equal discussion could be done around the well in the center of town. Alternatively the personnel might correctly diagnose the walk to the well as necessary time and space for the

exchange, but view that time as less important than easy access to clean water, and then assume that the village women would share these priorities.

If, on the other hand, the U.S. Soldier does not feel any identification with, or understanding of, the new culture, then s/he is less likely to be subject to projection and thus more vigilant about monitoring her or his sociocultural awareness.

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias, also known as confirmatory thinking, encompasses the tendency to search for and to interpret information as confirming one's prior conceptions, hypotheses, or beliefs (Nickerson, 1998; Wason, 1960). People tend to avoid rejecting their prior ideas or beliefs either because they truncate their search for appropriate data (selective collection of evidence) or because they interpret data in ways that are consistent with their prior beliefs (selective interpretation of evidence). Two cognitive activities have been proposed to explain why people may either selectively collect or selectively interpret evidence. One is a more active mechanism, called positive thinking, which argues that people construct positive rather than negative tests of hypotheses; search for information that fits the current hypothesis (without considering its implications for alternate hypotheses); and misconstrue un-diagnostic or even contrary evidence as supportive of the current view (Bazerman & Moore, 2009). The second is a more passive mechanism that argues people's cognitions are limited and because of these cognitive limitations, people simply follow the easiest path of sense-making (Busemeyer, Hastie, & Medin, 1995), thus limiting information search or limiting the interpretation of data to be consistent with prior beliefs (Bazerman & Moore, 2009).

There are three general conditions under which confirmatory thinking is more likely to occur. First, it is more likely to occur when someone has a strong prior belief or expectation about an issue, event, or person. Second, it is more likely to occur when someone has a strong motivation or preference for a particular belief, conclusion, or course of action. Finally, confirmatory thinking is more likely to occur when a person observing a stimulus (an action, situation, or event) cannot fluently generate alternative hypotheses or interpretations for that stimulus.

The underlying mechanisms and conditions for occurrence suggest that confirmation bias might threaten all aspects of sociocultural awareness. First, if U.S. military personnel are predisposed to interpreting events or behaviors as disconnected from any larger cultural meaning, confirmation bias would encourage this already formed belief. Second, if U.S. personnel do acknowledge that a particular event or behavior has a larger sociocultural implication, but they misinterpret the meaning of the event or behavior, confirmation bias would encourage belief in the correctness of their misinterpretation. Finally, if U.S. personnel do attach the correct meaning to an event or behavior but fail to recognize the strength of the attachment or difficulty in changing the event or behavior, confirmation bias would again encourage these faulty conclusions. In other words, confirmation bias will work in conjunction with other biases to exacerbate people's overconfidence in their initial estimates of the situation and thus attenuate any careful attention toward sociocultural awareness.

Once again returning to the opening vignette, a Soldier with a pre-existing idea to build a well in the center of the village might fall prey to confirmatory thinking. This bias could influence any analysis of the situation: the Soldier may fail to question the viability of the proposed project, design a survey that frames questions to elicit responses in favor of the well, or only survey the villagers likely to support the project. The flawed information that results from such analysis would lend support to the idea to build a well and prevent the Soldier's awareness of how important the women's walk is to their cultural system.

Compensating for These Biases to Improve Sociocultural Awareness

The above cognitive biases (fundamental attribution error, bias blind spot/naïve realism, projection, and confirmation bias) reduce sociocultural awareness because they either encourage people to discount the impact of sociocultural forces on behavior or encourage people to be overconfident in their interpretations of others' behavior and/or their own ensuing decisions about courses of action. The general theme here is that once someone has a belief in mind these beliefs become part of their own schematic model and thus very sticky or resistant to change.

Despite recent pushes to develop the research on reducing bias (Milkman, Chugh, & Bazerman, 2009), the literature on how to de-bias judgment is still rather nascent and there is no broad interdisciplinary mandate for behavioral-based research on training methods (Larrick, 2004; Tetlock & Mellers, 2011). These limitations notwithstanding, however, some research offers limited ideas on how to improve sociocultural awareness.

Strive for More Complete Information

Errors in people's judgments and decisions stem from bounded rationality (Simon, 1957; Kahneman, 2003), meaning people err because they make decisions with incomplete information. People's schematic models for processing information are limited, narrowing their search for, and interpretation of, evidence. One way to broaden these models is to ask for input from as many different sources as one can reasonably cultivate. Naturally it is impossible to attend to input from an unlimited number of sources, but the key here seems to be *diversity in inputs*—meaning diversity of sources.

Anthropologists have long since recognized the value of multiple key informants, since any particular informant will naturally bring their own schematic model and biases to any discussion. Seeking input from a broad diverse group of informants can have an error-dampening effect on the information-gathering stage, encouraging more complete information. Returning to the opening vignette, imagine if the U.S. personnel had talked to other informants in addition to the village elders. Personnel might have learned about the importance of the time women took to walk to the stream.

In most complex decision-making tasks where there is ambiguity about the best course of action, asking for outside opinions can improve final decisions (Milkman et al., 2009). Candid communication with other parties that allows the sharing of beliefs, values, and assumptions can reduce misinformation about the other party—either their thoughts or their behavior (Thompson et al., 2006), again offering a more complete picture of any situation. Of course open

communication requires time and is best done when there are no perceived status differences between the communicators (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), thus executing this mandate in the field will have its own difficulties.

Nonetheless, more complete information about any situation should sharpen U.S. Soldiers' judgments about when observed behavior is individually driven and when it is connected to a larger sociocultural system. A richer, more complete schematic model of a situation should also enhance U.S. Soldiers' cultural interpretation of the meaning that underlies observed events, behaviors, or situations. They should be less likely to infer incomplete or inaccurate connections between the observed stimuli and the broader sociocultural fabric in which they are embedded. Finally, more complete information from a diverse set of informants should increase their accuracy in judging how difficult a new change might be to implement.

Question Initial Assumptions

Even as one talks to multiple sources to enhance data collection that can inform sociocultural awareness, one must also be proactive in monitoring one's own interpretation of the information once gathered. Recall that most biases function at the subconscious level—they operate out of awareness and thus their impact can be difficult to measure. To counteract this blindness, it is helpful for people to actively question initial assumptions underlying their beliefs and decisions and "consider the opposite" of their view (Larrick, 2004). Elucidating assumptions offers people the opportunity to examine them for validity and completeness. Of course this, too, is easier said than done, since initial assumptions and ensuing biases are automatically constructed. This means slowing down one's interpretation of any data gathered, which can be very difficult in time-sensitive situations.

The trick here seems to be in asking oneself the right questions to provoke different beliefs, interpretations of data, and conclusions. Some research has suggested that asking questions, such as, "How might I be wrong in my beliefs or interpretations? How might my suggested course of action not work?" Although the empirical research on the utility of these questions is scant, Tetlock & Mellers (2011) offer a slightly different question that may be less subject to confirmation bias, which is, "What evidence would I need to see in order to change my beliefs, interpretations, or conclusions?" The idea here is that by answering this question, one is more likely to incorporate any disconfirming data, making for a more accurate synthesis of the data.

Manage Change Gingerly

One final suggestion toward embracing a sociocultural approach speaks less to the quality of any judgments and decisions and more to an acknowledgment that no decisions are perfect. Even the most aware U.S. Soldier, who is attuned to the local sociocultural system and how it may impact people's behavior, is unlikely to predict every possible reaction to a project or novel practice. Change to any complex system (even one to which a person has deep knowledge) has unpredictable consequences, particularly when units (people, institutions) are tightly coupled with multiple linkages (Perrow, 1984).

The unpredictable nature of change in systems suggests the need to manage any change carefully with heightened awareness of negative externalities on any particular group of people. Change efforts should be monitored step by step with feedback loops and mechanisms put in place to fine-tune solutions as more data emerges (Fischoff, 1982). Metrics of what qualifies as success or failure (or external costs and benefits) could be developed and measured along the way to ensure that the overall change is positive rather than negative. As well, these metrics might be developed with members of the local population, so that their concerns are voiced and incorporated.

Conclusion

Most people are averse to change because of the uncertainty it brings, and decision research has consistently shown people are averse to uncertainty (Ellsberg, 1961). To that end, the change management literature suggests change-makers should create a sense of urgency, cajole key stakeholders to be ambassadors in promoting change, and provide incentives for others to adopt changes (Kotter, 2008; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). Rather than relying on these persuasive techniques, we suggest a carefully managed process that moves slowly and encourages diverse voices and opinions of those affected. It begins with heightened sociocultural awareness of how current situations and behaviors are connected to a broader social fabric, understanding the meaning underlying current practices, and respecting that any change in activities may in fact be a larger change than originally anticipated. Understanding how one's own cognitive biases threaten this sociocultural awareness will help those navigating these forces in foreign lands. This obviously requires time, a scarce resource for many, and thus we end with a plea for a reasonable timeframe for any personnel tasked with such endeavors.

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Chapter 5

Beyond Words:
The Role of Nonverbal Communication in Navigating Sociocultural Systems

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> *Those of us who keep our eyes open can read volumes into what we see going on around us.*
>
> E.T. Hall (Knapp & Hall, 2010, p. 3)

Communication is an integral and dynamic element of a functioning sociocultural system. Simply put, it is how cultural members exchange information, intent and meaning. Moreover, communication acts as a window into understanding the worldview, core beliefs, and values that underlie and influence those exchanges, as well as the accompanying cultural behaviors.

While cultural members are typically able to accurately interpret the meaning and intent of communication within their own culture, misunderstandings still occur. Thus, it is not surprising that communication between two or more different cultures can result in even greater confusion or frustration, especially when they do not share a common language. Beyond spoken language, communication involves non-linguistic elements that are often culturally based and can deepen the complexity and increase the difficulty of successful interactions across cultures. These non-linguistic entities, also known as non-verbal communication modes, hold the key to decoding the formal and informal rules of successful intercultural communication and ultimately yield greater meaning about the communication. Further, mastering nonverbal interaction skills is critical to ensure leaders engaged in intercultural communication are effective in discourse ranging from informal, everyday conversations to more formal negotiations. Failing to appropriately interpret and express meaning and intent nonverbally could impact not only the outcome of an individual interaction, but something more vital: the mission at hand.

Why Nonverbal Communication (NVC) Matters

> *He [who] has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore.*
>
> Sigmund Freud (Knapp & Hall, 2007, p. 391)

Empirical research indicates that the majority of communication happens nonverbally. Any one nonverbal component, such as eye contact, can put forth conscious and unconscious

messages that portray our true feelings and intentions, or allow us to be clued into the feelings and intentions of those around us. This constant flow of giving and receiving nonverbal cues can send compelling messages that are often more profound than what can or is being expressed verbally. Because of its impact on interpersonal dynamics, all nonverbal behavior has communicative value.

Decoding and encoding nonverbal communication matters because the way you listen, look, move, and react causes the other interlocutor(s) to presume—correctly or incorrectly—whether or not you care, are telling the truth, and/or whether you are even listening. When your nonverbal cues align with your words, it increases trust, clarity, and contributes to building rapport. However, what we verbally articulate and what we communicate through body language can have conflicting meanings, thereby producing confusion, doubt, and anxiety. When faced with these mixed signals, the listener must decide whether to believe the verbal or nonverbal messages. In most cases, they will choose the nonverbal messages.

While this communication quagmire is more complex across cultures, it occurs even within one's own culture. A well-known example is that of Lieutenant General David McKeirnan. Apparently, he was removed from consideration for the position of Army Chief of Staff for the simple reason that he appeared to have what Pentagon officials described as "bad body language." This determination was made because McKeirnan stood with his arms crossed and did not respond in positive ways during "applause lines" while listening to a speech given by Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld in Iraq (Knapp & Hall, 2010, p. 22).

Mastering how to express one's own nonverbal communication—encoding—as well as how to accurately interpret that of others—decoding—requires a command and control of both explicit and implicit communication skills. This mastery is critical to accomplishing a goal, mission or task, including communicating who we are with regard to status and power, exercising influence over another person, and/or managing the back-and-forth flow of the conversation or interaction. Becoming adept at such skills is more deeply enhanced when one acquires and applies foundational knowledge of the general concepts and modes of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal Communication: Concepts and Definitions

> *Our sense of proxemics, the non-verbals we employ, our haptics, oculesics, [and] kinesics . . . are culture-bound, internalized by us as the result of the cultures we grew up in.*
>
> Lee Su Kim (2007)

Nonverbal communication is a term often used interchangeably with body language, although it encompasses more than bodily movement or expression. Broadly speaking, it can be described in four major categories: haptics (how we communicate through touch); proxemics (how we communicate through the use of space); chronemics (how we communicate through time); and kinesics (how we communicate using bodily movements and gestures). While the

rules and norms of NVC can vary significantly across cultures, it is important to always remember that you are dealing with individuals, and there are always exceptions to every rule.

The first of the four categories of NVC, haptics, refers to the functions, perceptions, and meanings of the amount of touch we need, tolerate, receive and initiate during an interaction with another individual. Touch can be used to communicate familiarity, sympathy, affection and various other emotions or messages. During an exchange, who touches whom, when, where, and how are all connected to our cultural upbringing.

Basic greetings that can vary from shaking hands to bowing to kissing on the cheek are just one example of the influence of culture on the unwritten rules of touching. In U.S. culture, we know what message is being communicated by a reassuring pat on the back versus a patronizing pat on the head, but either action may mean something different in another cultural context. Knowing the basic patterns regarding touch for the culture with which you are interacting will help mitigate both unintentional missteps and unexpected surprises that may offend or disrupt the flow of communication. One must be prepared to be touched, or not be touched, in a way that is unfamiliar or even uncomfortable.

The second category, proxemics, refers to the communicative effects of space or distance. How far away from people or objects we position ourselves is a balance of our individual and culturally based norms regarding privacy (or the need for distance) and interdependence (the need for nearness). Along with cultural factors, the amount of space or distance desired is also influenced by social norms, situational factors, individual characteristics (personality), and the level of familiarity of the situation. Understanding proxemics will aid in knowing how to avoid violating the space of other interlocutors as well as how to avoid allowing for too much distance, which could adversely impact the intimacy of the connection.

Edward T. Hall (1966, pp. 114-130) identified four zones of distance among U.S. adults: intimate distance (direct contact to 18 inches apart, sometimes referred to as one's "personal bubble"); personal distance (18 inches to 4 feet apart, usually reserved for close friends and relatives); social distance (4 to 12 feet apart, typical in business meetings or formal social gatherings); and public distance (12 to 25 feet apart, appropriate in a public speaking forum or in a public place with strangers). A visual depiction is that of dropping a pebble in a lake and watching the rings expand. Different people fall into place at each of the distinct rings based on familiarity and the nature of the relationship, with those closest to us being in the innermost rings. What is considered appropriate to Americans, however, varies significantly in other cultures. This variance may require one to operate outside of one's spatial comfort zone.

Thirdly, chronemics involves the use and structure of time in communication. It is a form of NVC because how one maneuvers social interactions around time imparts messages beyond the spoken word. Moreover, culturally based perceptions of time impact its usage and value. There are two classifications of chronemics: monochronic and polychronic. A monochronic society views time as a linear entity, with emphasis placed on adhering to schedules and focusing on one item at a time. Punctuality is an expectation and is associated with respecting the time of others. American and most northern and western European cultures are examples of monochronic societies. Further, the "organizational" culture of the U.S. military maintains an

even stricter sense of time, as is underscored by the common saying, "If you're on time, you're late."

Conversely, polychronic societies see time in a more circular, abstract way. Time is not usually focused on the clock; rather, the priorities are the needs of people, traditions, and relationships. This approach permits multiple items to be addressed at once versus one after another. The emphasis is on the broader picture over a period of time in lieu of one instant in time. Cultures in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East operate predominately on the polychronic system of time. This temporal flexibility and inattention to punctuality can be very frustrating and seem rude and disrespectful to people from a monochronic society. Similarly, a person from a polychronic society may perceive the linear approach to time as abrupt, impersonal, and disruptive to building trust and rapport in relationships.

Lastly, kinesics is the study of human movement and gesticulation. It includes facial expressions, gestures, body movements and eye behavior. How the face and body are used to convey a message differs according to the general display rules of culture, to include the appropriateness of behavior (Ekman, 1972). Perceptions of others are affected—consciously and subconsciously—by the way they move and carry themselves, including their posture, bearing, stance, and subtle or exaggerated movements.

Facial expressions are perhaps the most frequently cited example of nonverbal communication. Paul Ekman employed a facial action coding system (FACS) to identify what are now commonly referred to as the seven universal emotions: fear, disgust, surprise, happiness, anger, sadness and contempt (Ekman, 1972). While these facial expressions are considered universal by most, there exist many other facial expressions, such as how one conveys pain or interest, that vary significantly across cultures and thus require a more nuanced understanding of the particular culture to decipher meaning.

Gesticulation is the use of gestures or deliberate physical movements and signals to communicate meaning. However, we often express ourselves with gestures without necessarily being cognizant of doing so. Some are fairly widespread, such as waving or pointing, but most are arbitrary and related to cultural factors. Regardless, even common gestures can have very distinct meaning in different cultures, or can be considered normal in one but extremely uncouth in another (i.e., a thumb's-up in American culture can mean "okay" or is used as positive reinforcement, whereas in other cultures, it can be offensive).

Further, more subtle bodily movements can impact and/or alter interactions by intentionally or unintentionally conveying feelings and attitudes. For instance, posture can portray whether one is interested in the conversation, or is perturbed, indifferent, angry, or engaged by the communication. Because the meaning of gestures and body language can be very different across cultures, it is important to develop nonverbal self-awareness in order to recognize the meaning of body movements in other cultures and to avoid misunderstandings or causing offense in an intercultural interaction.

The behavior of one's eyes is another key element of kinesics. Eye movement, eye gaze, and the technical term oculesics all refer to the use of eyes in nonverbal communication. How

one looks at another person can communicate many things, including interest, acceptance, hostility or affection. In an intercultural interaction, it is important to know the cultural norms regarding eye contact—for example, should it be maintained the entire time, or does the culture maintain direct eye contact only sparingly. Adjusting one's eye behavior to the other culture's unwritten rules is paramount for maintaining the flow of conversation and for gauging the other person's response and level of engagement.

Knowledge of the concepts of NVC provides a way to derive the meaning and intent of touch, space, time, and bodily movement. However, it is important to understand cultural variance regarding the four major categories of nonverbal communication in the broader context of communication styles. The next section will describe how the communication style of a particular culture can further impact how one deciphers what is embedded in nonverbal behaviors.

Communication Styles across Cultures

Saphiere, Mikk, and DeVries (2005) define communication style as "the way in which we communicate, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that comprises our preferred ways of giving and receiving information in a specific situation. If the message content is the what, and the communicators are the who, then communication style is the how" (p. 5). This "how" component of communication style, to include when and in what manner NVC modes are utilized, varies from culture to culture, and thus the cultural context frames the way in which a message is delivered and, consequently, interpreted.

With regard to communication style, there are two broad categories to consider: low-context communication (LCC) and high-context communication (HCC; Hall, 1976). Those from a low-context culture (e.g., United States, Canada, and Northern Europe) usually communicate more directly, with explicit verbal expressions focused predominantly on factual information instead of behavior and social cues. In LCC, the majority of the information is vested in the actual words, and it is the responsibility of the speaker to clearly communicate the message. Low-context cultures are typically individualistic, with an "I" orientation. They tend to put greater value on the specific task at hand over the relationships involved.

In contrast, individuals from high-context cultures (e.g., Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, and Southern Europe) communicate more indirectly, focusing more on status and context (social roles or positions) as well as nonverbal cues to convey a message. In HCC, communication is more dependent on context, and thus is less direct and somewhat oblique, which often leaves the listener responsible for accurately interpreting the message. High-context cultures are typically collectivist, with a "we" orientation. They operate with a group mindset, thus valuing such notions as harmony, saving face, and building relationships.

Knowing the intricacies of the concepts surrounding haptics, proxemics, kinesics and chronesics, as well as the cultural context of the communication style, will provide the foundational knowledge and cultural awareness to help decode what is being communicated. And yet, communication concepts and culture-specific facts are not sufficient to ensure success in decoding and encoding nonverbal communication. We don't communicate with cultures, we

communicate with people Thus, it is equally significant to understand how to utilize this knowledge and awareness to one's advantage in a real situation. This requires acquiring a set of interaction skills that combines knowledge and interpersonal skills with goal-oriented behavior. This combination provides leaders with the communication adaptability to appropriately and effectively perform across intercultural contexts to achieve desired end-states.

Interaction Skills and Nonverbal Communication

NVC is encoded with varying degrees of control and awareness (Lakin, 2006). Further, research supports that behaviors displayed during interactions appear to have a strong effect on how people judge and receive a conversation and its partners (Manusov & Patterson, 2006). There are various interaction skills that contribute to success in both verbal and nonverbal intercultural communication. Those that resonate the most regarding nonverbal communication include employing effective nonverbal message skills, exhibiting awareness of cultural variation in communication styles, demonstrating impression management, and displaying communication adaptability. The first two are knowledge-based and require acquiring and then applying relevant knowledge (covered earlier in this paper) in an intercultural context. The other two are interactions skills that go beyond the application of knowledge.

Impression management theory includes the belief that a basic motivation of individuals is to be viewed favorably by others (Goffman, 1959). Portraying oneself in a positive manner would seem to contribute to successful intercultural communication, but it is not that simple. This skill set involves a combination of emotional regulation and self-monitoring that is essential to creating a positive or favorable response by the cultural other.

Emotional regulation is defined as the ability to manage, modify and use our emotions toward constructive outcomes. In the literature surrounding nonverbal communication, emotional regulation is considered the most important predictor of the ability to adjust and adapt in an intercultural context. Maintaining an outward appearance that does not necessarily align with how one is feeling is difficult at any time, but often even more so when interacting with a person from another culture, as the effort may involve coping with cultural surprises or managing attitudes about a significantly disparate belief system. Controlling physical reactions—facial expressions, eye movement, body language, etc.—is an example of emotional regulation in the context of nonverbal communication.

Equally important to impression management is the concept of self-monitoring. This concept encompasses not only the ability to detect the appropriateness of our own social behaviors and self-presentation in response to situational constraints, but also to appropriately adjust and modify our behaviors depending on the circumstances at hand. People who ask themselves, "Who should I be in this situation and how can I be that person?" are considered high self-monitors. In contrast, low self-monitors would ask, "Who am I and how can I be me in this situation?" Evaluating the social situation before presenting an appropriate response is preferable to simply presenting a consistent, even stubborn image of self regardless of the circumstances when communicating across cultures. Thus, a high self-monitor is typically more effective in intercultural communication.

Further underscoring the significance of impression management are the results of a study conducted by the Army Research Institute on Army and Marine advisors returning from Afghanistan and Iraq (Ramsden Zbylut, et al., 2009). The report surveyed the various interpersonal, linguistic, and cultural skills the advisors employed in their duties. At the top of the list of skills they reported as most vital to their performance was impression management.

Communication adaptability involves the ability to change our goals and behaviors to meet the specific need of the situation or circumstance. Moreover, it signals our awareness of the perspective and/or goals of the other individual or group, as well as our willingness to modify our own interests to adapt to the situation. Whereas self-monitoring is me-oriented, communication adaptability is other-oriented. This skill is mostly employed through verbal communication, but is relevant in nonverbal communication as well when adjusting and adapting one's use of touch, space, time, and bodily movement with regard to the culturally based behavior occurring in the interaction.

Whether the interaction skills covered are enacted in a way that is successful, appropriate, and clear to the person from another culture is a matter of competence. This competence begins with the knowledge of how to effectively utilize nonverbal message skills in the context of culturally based communication styles. Then, this knowledge helps guide one to manifest the skills of impression management and communication adaptability to ensure a successful intercultural interaction.

Conclusion

> *There is no conceivable human action which custom has not at one time justified and at another condemned.*
>
> Joseph Wood Crutch (1929, p. 13)

People do not act in a vacuum, but in response to, and in concert with, the actions of others. Communication—both verbal and nonverbal—is at the heart of our interactions within any sociocultural system. Effective intercultural communication requires the ability to effectively take part in any given social context by understanding what is being communicated and by employing the appropriate language (verbal) and behavior (nonverbal) to convey an intended message.

Successfully decoding and encoding meaning and intent in nonverbal communication first requires a solid foundation of knowledge regarding how culture impacts the way people communicate through touch (haptics), space (proxemics), time (chronemics), and bodily movement (kinesics). Framing that conceptual knowledge in the context of culturally based communication styles (low-context vs. high-context) will deepen understanding of the nonverbal behaviors and messages conveyed. Lastly, developing a set of interaction skills that include employing effective nonverbal message skills, exhibiting awareness of cultural variation in

communication styles, demonstrating impression management and displaying communication adaptability will further augment the ability to perform successfully in intercultural interactions.

Pairing one's knowledge of nonverbal modes of communication and communication styles with appropriate interaction skills enables leaders to establish rapport through being convincing, appearing trustworthy, and being able to impart influence during an intercultural interaction. This comprehensive approach is much more than just reacting in the moment during a face-to-face encounter. It is instead an iterative process, combing readiness (pre-interaction learning) and operational execution (during the interaction) with reflection, honing and preparation for reengagement (post-interaction)—all with the watermark of communicative adaptability. Whether an informal conversation or a formal negotiation with consequences critical to national security objectives, this comprehensive approach provides a guide to successfully achieving one's goals in intercultural communication, and can often be the determining factor in mission success.

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Chapter 6

Understanding Sociocultural Systems through a Narrative Lens

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The idea of sociocultural systems has gained a lot of currency in military and government circles in recent years. This is no doubt because during this time Western countries have become embroiled in lengthy insurgencies in societies with cultures very different from their own. Insurgency brings the military and its operations into close contact with people from a different sociocultural system, and success depends in no small part on successful cooperative interaction with them. Problems can develop when one system clashes with another.

A good example of this is the emphasis the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has placed on the use of "night raids." The raids are popular with military commanders because they create a better chance of catching the adversary off-guard. Nighttime attacks were also a favored tactic of the Taliban in their conflict with the Soviet Union (Dick, 2002). In the current conflict, night raids take advantage of an asymmetry *in favor* of Western forces, namely their ability to operate in darkness because of sophisticated night vision equipment.

However, the night raids have been deeply unpopular with the innocent Afghans affected, especially because of how the raids are interpreted within their culture. This excerpt from an ISAF news release (ISAF Headquarters, 2010), which accompanied a modified policy on conducting the raids, explains:

> In the Afghan culture, a man's home is more than just his residence. It represents his family and protecting it is closely intertwined with his honor. He has been conditioned to respond aggressively in defense of his home and his guests whenever he perceives his home or honor is threatened. In a similar situation, most of us would do the same. This reaction is compounded when our forces invade his home at night, particularly when women are present. Instinctive responses to defend his home and family are sometimes interpreted as insurgent acts, with tragic results. Even when there is no damage or injuries, Afghans can feel deeply violated and dishonored, making winning their support that much more difficult.

Someone charged with a security mission might have a hard time understanding why Afghans would have a strong aversion to the raids. Their homes are more than just residences—as are ours, and we also have instincts to protect them. We too would feel violated and dishonored if Soldiers broke down our door in the wee hours of the morning.

Do the Afghans not realize that these raids are *for their own good*? Reacting to President Karzai's demands that the raids be stopped, one blogger said: "Karzai's opposition to the night raids is irrational. How can the people feel secure if the government does not protect them from

the Taliban who take over a village at night? Trying to deal with those who intimidate in the night by going in after they leave is ridiculous" (Merv, 2011).

In this paper I suggest that narrative is a good lens for understanding problems like this. In the next section I unpack the idea of a sociocultural system, looking at its component ideas of society, culture, and system. Next I look at the most opaque aspect of these systems—culture— and show why the most popular way of thinking about it is questionable for operational purposes. After that I explain what narrative is and how narrative is a better way to understand culture and describe its important features and principles. I conclude with some best practices for understanding sociocultural systems "on the ground" through a narrative lens.

Sociocultural Systems

The point of this paper is not to get into the academic weeds of theory and definition. Still, it is important to have an idea of what a sociocultural system is, because the term is often applied loosely, and I use the term somewhat differently than in the introductory essay of this volume. For our purposes here, we can start by breaking the concept down into the component ideas of society, culture, and system.

A *society* is a collection of people who live together in a coherent geographic area, who are related through politics and culture. *Culture* is the set of shared symbols, practices, values, and norms that are continually produced by members of a social group. You have probably noticed that culture is part of the definition of a society, and that the "social group" that produces culture sounds a lot like a society. That is because it is now commonly assumed that culture comes about as a response to problems of daily life (Harris, 1979). So society is a structure where interaction between people happens, and culture is a superstructure that guides the way the interaction works. Another popular metaphor is that society is like hardware and culture is like software.

A *system* is a coherent set of interconnected components, forming a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Some components of culture—symbols, practices, values, and norms— have already been mentioned elsewhere in this anthology (e.g., Chapters 9, 14, and 17). Components of society include things like laws, groups, political systems, and economies.

Because cultural components are related to social ones, it makes sense to speak of a *sociocultural system*. For example, an economy depends on symbols (such as coins and paper money), laws are derived from values (thou shalt not kill), political systems are based on norms (one person, one vote) and so on. The point is that to understand society and culture, you need to look at them together, think about how they relate, and always keep the "big picture" of the system in mind.

There is a large body of work on systems theory devoted to identifying important features of this big picture. It is far beyond the scope of this chapter to delve into it,[9] but two things are

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[9] Interested readers can learn more from a variety of sources, including von Bertalanffy (1950), Checkland (1997), and Laszlo (1995).

especially important for this discussion. First, sociocultural systems are *complex*. Complex systems have elements that are *distinct*—meaning there is variety and lack of order among them—yet *connected*—meaning that the elements mutually constrain one another, creating structure (Heylighten, 1996). These two things together make the system behave in ways that are difficult to predict and understand. For example, nobody quite understands why the Arab Spring protests of 2011 happened when they did. The social and political conditions protesters were rejecting—authoritarian government, corruption, expensive food, high unemployment—had existed for decades, as had some level of political unrest. Protests in Tunisia were catalyzed by the self-immolation of a street vendor, but it is not entirely clear why this event should have thrown the system into revolution. Some complex combination of factors led to the tipping point.

Second, systems have boundaries. There is some virtual "line" where on one side we find the system and on the other we find everything else. Boundaries are necessary for theoretical reasons I will not go into here. But for practical purposes they are important because problems in communication often arise when different sociocultural systems interact across these boundaries. This is why the U.S. military has become so interested in sociocultural systems.

System boundaries are not always apparent or commonly recognized. In fact, what we think of as "the system" for any particular purpose is a matter of where in a hierarchy of systems we place a dividing line between the system we want to analyze and its environment. For example, in tribal societies there may be hierarchy of social systems going from family, to tribe/clan, to ethnic group, to nation. We could treat any of these as a sociocultural system, with things "below" as subsystems and things "above" as the environment. The choice is important because it influences how we see things operating. Something that looks simple at one level might well look complicated at another.

Culture as the Main Challenge

Though society and culture form a system, the cultural elements are relatively more difficult for an outsider to understand and handle. The elements of society are not always straightforward, but they are more standard and easy to understand. For example, all societies have a political system, and after millennia of social evolution the possibilities for political systems are mostly understood. In any given country we might have democracy, theocracy, socialism, dictatorship, and so on. We have templates for how these forms of politics work that we can apply to understand what is going on in a given society. Much the same can be said for other aspects of societies, such as economies and social hierarchies.

Culture, on the other hand, is more difficult to grasp because it develops over time from the workings of societies. And since sociocultural systems are complex, there is no one-to-one relationship between societal features and the culture they will produce. For instance, while we can predict with confidence that any country with a market economy will have some form of banking system, we cannot so easily predict that it will have particular values or use certain symbols. Culture is key to understanding how people interpret what happens in their society and how they make decisions about things they should or should not do.

Culture as a Variable

The most common way to try to grasp culture is what I will call a *culture-variable approach*. We identify a number of different variables where cultures might differ, and then we measure different sociocultural systems to see how they stack up on those variables. This is especially useful when the objective is to compare one sociocultural system to another, because you can measure the same cultural elements for each. Travel guides for foreign countries will often have advice for the traveler based on attributes of the foreign destination that differ from his or her own.

A very popular example of this approach was developed over 30 years ago by Geert Hofstede (1980) and widely popularized in a book published at the beginning of the 1990s (Hofstede & Hofstede, 1991). He began by describing four "dimensions" or scales on which cultures can vary. His original set of four dimensions has been supplemented by two additional ones in subsequent years. These dimensions are summarized in Table 1.

Hofstede collected data and published ratings for 76 countries on these dimensions. He was at pains to point out that such ratings could only be used comparatively. A statement on his website insists that "country scores on the dimensions are relative—societies are compared to other societies. Without make *[sic]* a comparison a country score is meaningless" (Hofstede, 2011). For example, comparing the United States to China, we find that the main differences are in power distance (China higher), individualism (U.S. much higher), and long-term orientation (China much higher). Presumably these differences point to potential trouble spots in interactions between Chinese and Americans. For example, Americans might have a hard time understanding why the Chinese would suppress individual expression against the government, and the Chinese might have a hard time understanding why Americans are so willing to tolerate it.

Hofstede's work has received considerable support. One review of research showed that most studies have confirmed the predictions of his model (Søndergaard, 1994). However, his work has a number of detractors who have identified problems with his approach. This is not the place for a review of academic debates, but two of these criticisms are particularly relevant to the topic at hand.

First, Hofstede measures the cultural dimensions of nations, which confuses sociocultural systems with cultures. Nations are geographic units that define societies, but cultures are not restricted to national boundaries. The comparison above between Americans and Chinese would be true at some level for Americans and Asian countries in general. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are virtually indistinguishable on Hofstede's dimensions despite the fact that they are different societies. Whatever differences between countries are shown in Hofstede's measures probably result from a complex interaction of culture and society, rather than differences in culture per se.

Table 1

Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Dimension	Description
Power Distance	How much relations are governed by a social hierarchy. The higher the power distance, the less equal people are as a function of their social positions. The lower the power distance, the more equal people are, other things being equal.
Individualism-Collectivism	How much members of a culture orient action toward self-interest. The more individualistic, the more people look out for themselves and people close to them. The more collectivistic, the more people consider the interests of the community in deciding what to do or how to behave.
Masculinity-Femininity	How much a culture values male versus female orientations toward problems and action. Masculine cultures are more competitive and favor achievement, performance-based reward, aggressiveness, etc. Feminine cultures favor cooperation, and value nurturing, participation, and modesty.
Uncertainty Avoidance	How much a culture can tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. The higher the uncertainty avoidance the more important it is to have plans and regulation of behavior, and the less tolerance there is of people or ideas that deviate from convention. The lower the uncertainty avoidance, the more willingness there is to "go with the flow."
Long term-Short term (added 1991)	How much the long run figures in the calculations of a culture. The more long-term the orientation, the more a culture will forego immediate outcomes for future benefits, invest in the future, and be adaptable. The more short-term the orientation, the more focus there is on achieving quick results. Hofstede says this dimension deals with "society's search for virtue."
Indulgence-Restraint (added 2010)	How much a culture indulges basic drives. The higher the indulgence, the more people are allowed to have fun and enjoy themselves. The higher the restraint, the more reserved people are and the more their personal behavior is governed by strict codes.

Note. This is my paraphrase of Hofstede's dimensions. For formal definitions, see Hofstede and Hofstede (1991).

Second, and more important from the point of view of this paper, using Hofstede's dimensions to calibrate personal interaction is questionable. It may be a sound basis for understanding tendencies of a culture in general. But assuming that all individuals or even small groups within that culture have the same characteristics commits the *fallacy of division*—assuming that what is true of a whole is true of its parts.

One analysis shows that less than 5% of the variation in individuals is accounted for by Hofstede's cultural profiles for their home country (Gerhart & Fang, 2005). We can all recognize this from personal experience. We know Americans who—despite their cultural profile—are very "hierarchical," who think more of the group than of themselves, and/or who take a long-term view. While Hofstede's dimensions are interesting characterizations of very large groups, it

is a mistake to assume they will automatically be valid for individuals we encounter "on the ground."

This is the challenge of understanding culture. First, it is complex. There is no "magic bullet" that provides instant, unambiguous insight into what is going on in a culture. There is a limit to what *anyone* can understand about a culture unless they have lived in it for an extended period and can speak the language. Second, culture is not a single thing that is understood by everyone the same way. This is why the culture-variable approach fails: even if there are things that are true in general about a culture, different individuals will understand and manifest them in different ways. These considerations reinforce a key theme of this volume: the importance of humility and recognizing one's limitations when dealing with matters of sociocultural systems.

Culture as Narrative

Given these truths about culture, *narrative* is one of the best tools for understanding it. A narrative, simply put, is a *system of stories*.[10] Stories are just what you would think: an account of a sequence of related events, having some resolution or projected resolution. To be coherent the events in a story must be related. So, saying "I drank a cup of coffee this morning, then there was an earthquake in Oklahoma" would not be a story. Forster (1956) gives another famous example. To say "the King died; then the Queen died" could be a statement of random events, but to say "the King died; then the Queen died of grief" provides a connection between the events that demands analysis by the reader/hearer to apply his or her understanding of how narrative elements are related.[11]

While there are stand-alone stories, in many cases stories form a system. The elements making up the system might be people, events, and sequences. Stories often follow *themes*. For instance, when elections are near in the U.S. (and probably elsewhere), there are many stories in the media about the "horse race" of the campaign—who is ahead, who is coming on to challenge, who is likely to win, etc. Stories in a system can also follow similar *forms*, which are standard patterns on which stories may be based that define typical patterns of events. For instance, despite differences in their surface details (and quality), the films *Forrest Gump*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* all follow a rags-to-riches story form. Finally, stories in a system may share *archetypes*, standard characters we might expect to find in stories with conventional motives and expected behaviors. Heroes and villains are examples of archetypes.

When stories share themes, forms, and archetypes, they make up a narrative. An example of a narrative for the United States is the Afghanistan War. It includes stories of the 9/11 attacks, how al-Qaeda planned the attacks from bases in Afghanistan, and how it was allowed to operate there by the Taliban. It also includes stories of the initial invasion that ousted the Taliban leaders and sent al-Qaeda on the run, and the emergence of the Taliban insurgency after the United

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[10] These terms, *story* and *narrative*, and their relative meanings are the subject of a great deal of debate among academics. They are used here in senses developed by my colleagues and me to be maximally useful for practitioners who are not so concerned with terminological debates.

[11] Forster would also call the former a story and the latter a narrative, an example of terminological confusion that reigns in narratology. The definitions I use here are part of a larger effort to sort that out.

States turned its attention to Iraq. More recently we have numerous stories of military battles, government corruption, the opium trade, meddling by Pakistan, drone strikes, and the night raids mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. These stories make up a whole that we use to make sense of (or not make sense of) the Afghanistan conflict.

According to Burke (1989), all narratives have an identifiable pattern that is created by a desire to resolve a conflict, and that ends in satisfaction of that desire. There is a trajectory of participants, actions, and events that connects the desire to the satisfaction. Figure 1 shows Burke's narrative trajectory in graphic form.
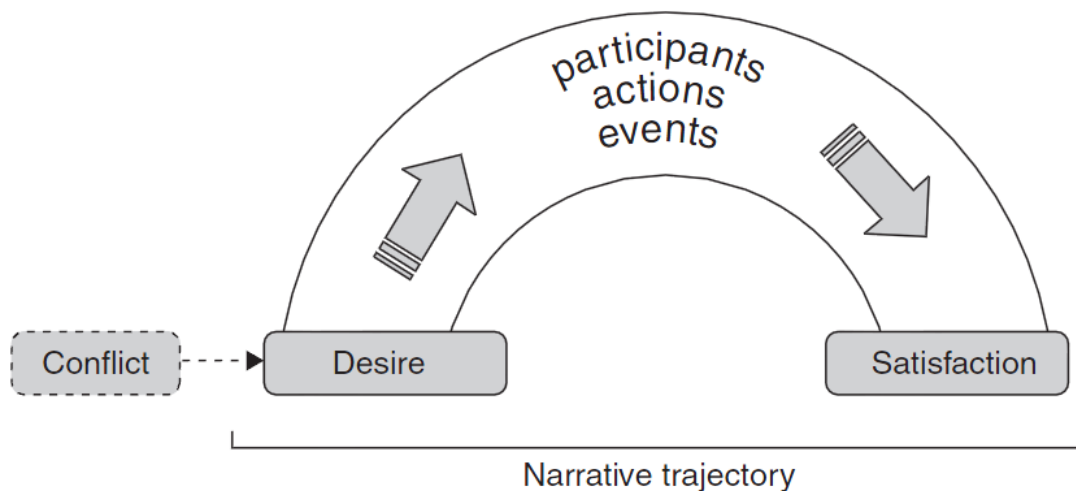
Figure 1. **Elements of narrative form.**

Here is an illustration of how it works using the Afghanistan narrative (as it was before the 2003 invasion of Iraq), with quotes from President Obama's (2009) speech at West Point on the same subject:

- The *conflict* is the conflict between al-Qaeda and the United States. Obama: "As we know, these [9/11 hijackers] belonged to al Qaeda—a group of extremists who have distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents."

- The *desire* is to eliminate a safe haven for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan where it could plan and execute future attacks. Obama: "Al-Qaeda's base of operations was in Afghanistan, where they were harbored by the Taliban—a ruthless, repressive, and radical movement that seized control of that country after it was ravaged by years of Soviet occupation and civil war."

- The *participants, actions, and events* are the efforts by the U.S. and its international allies to unseat the Taliban and destroy al-Qaeda. Obama: "America, our allies, and the world were acting as one to destroy al-Qaeda's terrorist network and to protect our common security. Under the banner of this domestic unity and international legitimacy—and only after the Taliban refused to turn over Osama bin Laden—we sent our troops into Afghanistan."

- The *satisfaction* is a diminished al-Qaeda and an Afghanistan free of Taliban influence. Obama: "Within a matter of months, al-Qaeda was scattered and many of its operatives were killed. The Taliban was driven from power and pushed back on its heels. A place that had known decades of fear now had reason to hope."

Notice that even a single narrative like this reveals much about the norms and values of U.S. culture. For instance, we value international legitimacy when we undertake wars. We think there is something called "common security" that requires defending. We believe foreign governments should turn over radical groups in cases like this and, when they do not, should be subject to military action. We are against repression, occupation, civil war, and fear.

Narrative Rationality

This Afghanistan War narrative—and its continuation—also illustrates the way in which narrative creates a distinct form of sense-making. We (Westerners, especially) may think of ourselves as beings who understand the world by gathering facts and data, applying logical reasoning and rules to draw conclusions about them. But according to Fisher (1989), this picture is largely inaccurate. Calling humans *homo narrans,* he believes we exist in a world of *narrative rationality*. Life is not a set of logical puzzles, but a set of stories. We make decisions based not on facts and logic, but on "good reasons"—what makes a proper story given the context of history, culture, and cultural elements such as norms, values, beliefs, story forms, archetypes, and so on.

There are two tests of narrative validity for Fisher. One is *coherence*, the extent to which elements of a story fit together in a sensible way. A story like "John woke up early, dried off, got in the shower, then got out of bed so he could get to the meeting on time" is not coherent because the events are not ordered in a plausible way. Another test is *fidelity*: whether a story is plausible in terms of how the world, as we know it, actually works. An example of a story without fidelity is: "The King loved his subjects and they loved him. So one day the King set fire to the village and slaughtered his people as they ran from the flames." This story is logically possible, but in the world as we know it rulers who love their subjects do not slaughter them on a whim. If we added "but he was insane" to the first sentence of the story, it would create fidelity.

President Obama's speech mostly meets these criteria. It hangs together well and describes the world as Americans know it. The coherence of the satisfaction element is questionable on one point: it invokes "reason to hope," which seems unrelated to the conflict and desire stated earlier in the speech. This is an echo of a broader international narrative we created to rationalize our NATO partners' involvement. In that narrative the conflict was related not just to al-Qaeda, but to an extremist Taliban regime that oppressed its citizens, especially women,

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and destroyed world heritage. The desire for the broader NATO audience was to unseat this government and replace it with something more humane.

Both the narrower U.S. narrative and the broader international one lose narrative validity as we move to 2003 and beyond. We may have killed many al-Qaeda operatives prior to 2003, but not its leadership, and not enough to halt its ability to spread and inspire attacks. The Taliban may have been on its heels, but it has proved resilient, and the government we helped create has proven to be corrupt. An editorial in *Daily Outlook Afghanistan* (2012) sums up the situation:

> [P]eople think that international community has become an accomplice of the corruption in the government by failing to exert enough pressure on President Karzai to demonstrate a genuine will to clean up his administration. This disenchantment with the government is becoming a major driver of insecurity in the communities, and providing a context for the Taliban and other insurgent groups to capitalize on that disaffection.

The failure to finish off the Taliban and the prospect of a weak, corrupt government to take their place has undermined the narrative behind the war. It is no longer rational from a narrative point of view. As a result, public support for it in the United States and NATO partner countries, and in Afghanistan, is collapsing.

Master Narratives

Some narratives, because they are widely known in a culture and have endured for long periods of time, rise to the level of *master narratives* (Halverson, Goodall, & Corman, 2011). There is no bright line that separates a master narrative from a regular narrative, but a master narrative does have some signature characteristics. First, it applies not to narrow groups or segments of a population, but is widely known by members of a culture. The American Revolution is an example of a master narrative in the United States. Every schoolchild learns about the Revolution in civics and history classes.

Second, master narratives can be invoked in fragmentary form. A key word or phrase is enough to bring the master narrative to mind because everyone knows the stories. They do not have to be told explicitly. The "Tea Party," which is currently influential in U.S. politics, is an example of this. Their name refers to the Boston Tea Party.

By and large, master narratives are deeply rooted in history and religion. Accordingly, they carry a lot of cultural baggage. The Tea Party does not call itself that for nothing: the objective is to invoke the values of the American Revolution (particularly limiting government and rejecting taxation) to help advance their present-day political agenda. Master narratives are excellent devices for this purpose. They are patterns that frame events in the here and now, and encourage people to use them to understand, interpret, and evaluate events in particular ways. This can be positive, arguing for the desirability of a course of action. But it can also be negative, suggesting that a course of action violates the hallowed trajectory of the master narrative and threatens to undermine its validity.

Islamist extremists make extensive use of master narratives of Muslim history and culture to justify their agendas and actions. This is not the place for a complete review (see Halverson et al., 2011), but there are some examples that are particularly relevant to the Afghanistan War. One has to do with hundreds of stories published by the Taliban each month describing their battlefield victories. These stories follow a standard story form that we (Lundry, Corman, Furlow, & Errickson, in press) call the *victorious battle story*. The stories vastly exaggerate the deaths the Taliban cause among ISAF personnel (Lundry et al., in press).

The Taliban tell these stories to portray themselves as an effective fighting force, and to enhance their recruitment of young men to their cause. In May of 2011 an Indonesian web site that republishes these reports went a step further by referring to the campaign of attacks as "Operation Badr." This is a reference to the *Battle of Badr*, one of the master narratives of Islamist extremism (Halverson et al., 2011). It recounts a battle in which, despite seemingly impossible odds, Muhammad and his followers defeated a much larger and better-equipped army of unbelievers from Mecca. Their victory was ensured because the strength of their belief and convictions led God to send His angels to assist them on the battlefield.[12]

The Taliban's victorious battle stories regularly include an archetype going by a variety of names, including "crusader," "invader," and "invading terrorist." This archetype invokes the master narratives of infidel invaders (Halverson et al., 2011), which are very prominent in Muslim history. The numerous Crusades and invasions by the Mongols are examples. Invasions figure especially in Afghan history, too, with incursions by the Macedonians, Arabs, Persians, Scythians, Huns, Turks, Mongols, and Sikhs (among others) in older times, and more recently by British colonial forces and the Soviets (see Tanner, 2009). Connecting the current invasion to this history points out the value of persistence and resilience, and the narrative trajectory suggests that in the end the Western invaders will leave defeated, just like all of the forces that came before them.

Night Raids Revisited

With these narrative concepts in mind, let us see if we can better understand the ISAF statement from the beginning of the chapter about Afghans' objections to night raids. Again, the question is not why would they object to a night raid? It is safe to say that anyone, anywhere in the world, would be traumatized if Soldiers kicked down their door in the middle of the night, rounded up the family, and held them at gunpoint while they searched the premises and interrogated the men. The question is, how could this be *especially* upsetting to innocent Afghans who are not involved with the insurgency?

A common complaint is that problems are caused because women are present during the raids. For narrative insight into why the presence of women during night raids is a special problem,[13] we can look to stories recounted in the early biographies of Muhammad's life (called the *Seerah*). When the Prophet went from Mecca to Medina he became more of a ruler of his

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[12] There are also stories of divine intervention on the battlefield surrounding Osama bin Laden in the Afghan war against the Soviets (Wright, 2006).

[13] This is a brief account of a complex issue. For more in-depth discussion, see Mernissi (1992).

followers, by then numbering in the tens of thousands. There was tremendous demand for him to provide counsel and rulings, but he had limited time and energy. Accordingly, people started consulting Muhammad's many wives as a way to get indirect counsel from him. So many people visiting the wives' quarters inevitably led to problems of privacy and modesty, and so it was decided (Qur'an 33) that his wives should be addressed only from behind screens.

When Islam expanded through Persia in the seventh century, this custom came into contact with a more extreme practice called *Purdah*, in which women were kept completely sequestered from public life. Even though this practice was associated with Zoroastrianism rather than Islam, the two melded through cultural evolution. As Islam continued to expand eastward, this more extreme practice spread to Afghanistan and became accepted as a typical practice of the Prophet himself. Since Muhammed is *the* exemplar for Muslims (especially males), and they try to emulate his life, this issue of female modesty becomes imbued with religious significance. Intrusion into the home by non-Muslims during the night raids is not just a violation of privacy, but something more akin to a religious abomination, causing the reactions and problems noted in the ISAF statement.

Another issue, voiced in the statement by the blogger at the beginning of the chapter, is why Afghans do not realize that these raids are "for their own good." There has been some intimation that the Karzai government, while denouncing the raids in public, supports them in private. His chief of staff denies this (Frontline, 2011). President Karzai has also indicated that the raids might be more acceptable if they were conducted by Afghan forces (Boone, 2011), lending some credence to the for-their-own-good argument.

But as already noted, Afghanistan has been the site of invasions throughout its history. A narrative of invasions of the nineteenth century (not long ago for a culture with a long historical memory) endorsed by the Afghanistan government (Ritscher, 2002) shows why the motives of invaders might be viewed with skepticism:

> Beginning in the 1800s Afghanistan's internal affairs became dramatically aggravated by the increasing intervention by two new imperialist powers—the British Empire and Czarist Russia. . . . The two great powers essentially engaged in a race for Afghanistan, and their fiendish seizures of land, overthrow of indigenous nations and reckless interference into the affairs of the remaining independent states in the region became known as "the Great Game."

Invading forces have never really had Afghanistan's interests at heart, so why should present-day invaders be any different? Narrative rationality says to Afghans that outcomes of invasions are likely to be bad (until they manage to eject the invading forces), so the actions of the invaders are bad, too.

It is also worth noting that the narrative favored by the current invading forces is not particularly clear to Afghans (if, indeed, it is clear to us). A study by the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS, 2010) involving 1,000 participants from Helmand and Kandahar provinces presents this in stark terms. When read a brief story describing the 9/11 attacks and asked, "Did you know about this event the foreigners call 9/11?" only 8% responded yes. When asked, "Why do you think the foreigners are here?" 42% said it was for nefarious

reasons, such as occupation, violence and destruction, to make money, and to destroy Islam. With no clear alternative being presented by the West, there is little hope that the indigenous Infidel Invaders narrative can be displaced.

Understanding Culture through Narrative

As the preceding section shows, narrative analysis can go a long way toward making confusing cultural situations, beliefs, and practices more understandable. I close by noting four best practices for seeing sociocultural systems through a narrative lens. These are principles that can be applied in normal interaction with people, to help make their narrative rationality more transparent.

Remember that narrative is its own form of rationality. Except in unusual circumstances, ordinary people do not make judgments based on data and rigorous logic. Instead they make judgments based on stories that describe similar situations in the past, and narratives that embody their cultural values. This explains, for example, why Muammar Gaddafi's forces in Libya fought and died in a desperate last stand in the fall of 2011. Even though they clearly had no hope and the rational thing to do was to give up, there were not "good reasons," in Fisher's (1989) narrative sense, to surrender. So it is important, above all, to listen for stories when you interact with others, because they embody this rationality and provide a chance to learn it.

Think about the narrative trajectory. When you hear stories, try to identify other stories they relate to, and how the system maps onto the elements in Figure 1. What is the conflict and what desire does it create in the person telling the story and his or her audience? What is the implied satisfaction of the desire? How do people, actions, and events link the desire with the satisfaction? Beyond simply understanding someone else's point of view, this kind of analysis can help you identify narrative alternatives. Perhaps there is a different way to frame the conflict or satisfy the desire, or a different trajectory that leads from desire to satisfaction.

Look for cultural elements of narratives and think about how they interact with societal elements. Culture is made up of elements such as symbols, practices, values, and norms. As the examples above show, these are directly reflected in narratives and the stories that make them up. Narratives also help people interpret society and orient toward its elements. It should be less surprising to us that Afghans do not value strong central governments once we know that such governments have regularly been installed by invading forces in the past.

Understand and be able to recognize master narratives. Master narratives are largely based in history and religion. So in contrast to the other three best practices, understanding master narratives is more a matter of education than "on the ground" experience. However, you can recognize that a master narrative is at work by looking for fragmentary references you do not understand. If you said to a foreigner, "Remember the Alamo," he or she would probably have no idea that you are saying to forget fear and charge ahead, and that this is part of a narrative of the Mexican-American War. But it is something they could learn. Likewise, if you heard Muslims talking about *al-Nakba,* it would be smart to look it up or consult an expert. You would learn that this is a master narrative about the "catastrophe" (translation of *nakba*) of the loss of Palestinian lands to the Jews after World War II.

The culture as narrative approach helps us understand why specific people interpret things in specific ways, and why they act the way they do. Applying these best practices will make you a better observer of culture "on the ground" and how it interacts with elements of society.

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Chapter 7

Cultural Change as Issues Resolution: Predicting Change in the Middle East

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The Outcomes and Processes of Cultural Change

The outcomes of cultural change involve changes in: (1) values, rituals, identity, and life-style; (2) the principles of social organization; (3) the arts and literature; and (4) religious beliefs and institutions. The actual process of change, however, is complex and often hard to detect. In some cases, change appears chaotic, exhibiting little discernible pattern; only multifaceted group conflicts, sociopolitical upheavals, violence, and contradictory events are noticeable. In other cases, change is hidden beneath the veneer of political stability and smooth economic transition, where a stable and quiet period of economic development is interrupted by a sudden emergence of revolutionary upheavals, leading to the breakdown of the existing political order and changes in social relations. In the first cases, we know that changes are transpiring, but we do not know the direction of these changes and what cultural pattern will predominate. In the second, we expect the emergent cultural pattern to correspond to the observable indicators of economic development and political formation but are surprised by the surfacing of a strong countercurrent. The situation of Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion in 2004 resembles the former cases, and the period of political stability and impressive economic growth in Iran just a few years before the 1979 revolution is an instance of the latter cases.

Is it possible to detect and predict the form and direction of cultural change? What are the key indicators that alert us about people's expanding desire for change? How can we develop a sociological insight that, much like a night-vision device, enhances the intensity of the light, reduces the haze, and separates the essentials from non-essentials under the chaotic conditions of rapid social change? Alternatively, is it possible to formulate a method that provides x-ray vision, enabling one to see through calm politics to the chaotic underpinning?

Given the current state of social-scientific knowledge, it may be too ambitious to try to predict changes in culture. Nonetheless, this paper makes a modest attempt by suggesting that one way to understand and predict change is to (1) consider historically significant issues as barometers of change and (2) conceive cultural change as a result of the resolution of these issues. When issues are resolved, one may expect that the existing societal model is abandoned or modified in favor of another. For example, in the years preceding the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–11), the arbitrary power of the monarch became a political issue among intellectual leaders and activists. Cultural change occurred when the revolution substituted a constitutional modality of politics for monarchical absolutism. In the years preceding the Iranian Revolution of 1979, on the other hand, the Shah's secular cultural policies and ties to the West were the predominant issues, not simply his authoritarianism. The revolution resolved this issue by substituting clerical absolutism for monarchical dictatorship (Moaddel, 1993, 2005).

The model proposed in this chapter analyzes issues resolution in terms of the variable features of the dynamic cultural context of ideological debates and religious disputations among both intellectual leaders and the public at large, on the one hand, and the role of the state and politically powerful groups in this context, on the other. To demonstrate the fruitfulness of this model in explaining and predicting change, this paper first draws on the historical cases of ideological change in the Middle East. It then uses findings from values surveys to explain trends in values among the citizens of Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.[14]

Correspondence Perspective on Cultural Change

A country's resources may increase as a result of:

1. Commercialization, industrialization, involvement in international trade, capitalist development, and new opportunities provided by globalization
2. The discovery, extraction, exploitation, and sale of a new natural resource (e.g., oil, gold, copper, or diamond)
3. The establishment of security, national integration, and the rise of an efficient and ambitious ruling elite, who decide to make investments in such infrastructural developments as the construction of roads and ports and the establishment or modernization of educational institutions
4. Technological innovation and breakthrough or the importation of new technology from abroad
5. Access to a cheap labor market
6. Favorable climatic conditions that increase agricultural productivity

These developments in turn generate new occupational positions and thus promote structural mobility and status attainments. In addition, economic prosperity facilitates lateral mobility, creating new neighborhoods and gated communities. Prosperity also pays for the production and consumption of cultural goods (books, artwork, music, and other forms of entertainment), leisure activities, including international travel by both state officials and members of the well-to-do public, and generally new lifestyle and consumption habits—hence the appearance or amplification of social contrasts among groups and classes. New occupational positions may provide a basis for the development of new outlooks on life, change people's cultural preferences and encourage them to develop tastes for different cultural products, and support the rise of new cultural movements.

For a long time, the predominant tendency among social scientists has been an attempt to establish a correspondence between these objective developments and cultural changes. Rooted in the classical tradition of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, the correspondence perspective presumes a duality between social structure and culture (ideology) and how culture relates to

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[14] The data presented in this paper are from several values survey research projects funded by the National Science Foundation, the Office of Naval Research, Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, Eastern Michigan University, and the University of Michigan. None of these organizations is responsible for the opinions expressed in this paper.

social structure in a causal manner. Émile Durkheim (1965) has a *mimetic* conception of religious ideas—they are the symbolic representations of social arrangements. Because religion reflects a vital aspect of collective solidarity, the form of religious unity changes step by step with each stage of structural and functional transformation (Swason, 1967; Wallwork, 1984). For Karl Marx (1976), too, culture is part of the ideological superstructure that corresponds to the economic foundation of society; it is "interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men" (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 36). Max Weber's (1964) approach is much more analytical and rich with detailed subtlety than either Durkheim's or Marx's position. He questions the purely materialistic analysis of ideas by arguing that, for example, religious ideas do not neatly intermesh with the economic interests of social groups or classes. Instead, he suggests that besides the social conditions of the unprivileged and the rationalism of the middle classes, religion is rooted in "the metaphysical needs of the human mind as it is driven to reflect on ethical and religious questions, driven not by material need but by an inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position toward it" (p. 117). Nevertheless, on a lower level of abstraction, Weber concedes that there is an elective affinity between diverse social groupings (for example, warrior classes, peasants, business classes, and intellectuals) and different religious tendencies. He establishes this correspondence through a secondary intellectual process of "reinterpretation of ideas" (Sadri, 1991, p. 41).

A most straightforward application of the correspondence perspective is Harris's (1968) technological determinism:

> I believe that the analogue of the Darwinian strategy in the realm of sociocultural phenomena is the principle of techno-environmental and techno-economic determinism. This principle holds that similar technologies applied to similar environments tend to produce similar arrangements of labor in production and distribution, and that these in turn call forth similar kinds of social groupings, which justify and coordinate their activities by means of similar systems of values and beliefs. (p.4)

Others have also attempted to explain culture and cultural changes in different historical settings. For example, Swanson (1967) claims that varying conceptions of God's immanence in Protestantism and Catholicism correspond to the structure of political authority in pre-Reformation Europe. Wallerstein (1984) relates the rise of liberalism in world politics to the dynamic of the world economy. Chatterjee (1993) construes third-world nationalism as a derivative discourse that rests on the interest of the national bourgeoisie. Finally, Harvey (1990) connects cultural changes in contemporary capitalist societies to changes in the regime of accumulation, maintaining that "postmodern fiction . . . mimics the conditions of flexible accumulation" (p. 305), and that "the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation . . . ought to imply a transition in our mental maps, political attitudes, and political institutions" (p. 305).

Each version of the correspondence perspective has its own difficulties. Durkheim is criticized for taking a "reductionistic attitude toward belief in God" (Godlove, 1989, p. 185; see also Phillips, 1976, and Richard, 1975). Goldenweiser and Evans-Pritchard have questioned Durkheim's mimetic theory, arguing that "it is no longer accepted that the primitiveness of a social system assures the primitiveness of the form of religion associated with it" (Wallwork, 1984, p. 49). Marxian cultural theory is also criticized for being one-sidedly materialist or class

reductionist. Finally, Weber's approach is considered inadequate because "the manner in which ideology is conceptualized has resulted in what sometimes appears as an overly subjectivist view of its nature and function" (Wuthnow, 1987, p. 123). The major problem with the correspondence perspective, however, is the absence of a mechanism that connects ideas to social structure.

To state the same criticism from the ground up, changes in objective social conditions decide neither the content nor the form of emergent cultures. It is not clear how the formation of new occupational positions, such as computer programmer in the new technology sector, will generate certain cultural and political attitudes. Likewise, it would be hard, on a broader level, to link a specific change in the economy, such as the invention of print and the development of print capitalism, to the emergence of nationalism or, as Anderson (1983) conceptualizes, imagined communities. Moreover, the absence of a mechanismic explanation notwithstanding, the historical experience of Middle Eastern countries in the modern period provides ample evidence that questions the direct effects of such oft-cited factors as economic development, print capitalism, access to modern means of communications and transportation, and travel to the West in bringing about modern cultural movements.

True, economic development in the nineteenth-century Middle East appears to have supported the rise of modern culture (e.g., Egypt and Lebanon). The introduction of print in the Muslim world in this period also contributed enormously to its cultural transformation (Robinson, 1993). Travel to the West by Middle Eastern high-ranking officials and intellectuals also contributed to cultural change in the region. In the travel memoirs of Indian Mirza Abu Talib Khan and Egyptian Rifa'a Badawi Rafi' al-Tahtawi, Europe's breathtaking technological progress and social organizations are favorably described, contributing to the rise of such modernist thought as liberalism and nationalism in India and Egypt (Moaddel, 2005). However, similar factors in the twentieth century failed to support the rise of liberal values and national identity. Economic development in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Syria in the second half of the century paralleled the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Likewise, twentieth-century Muslim visitors to the West displayed overly critical attitudes toward its culture; Egyptian Sayyid Qutb's visit to the U.S. in 1949 is believed to have reinforced his religious extremism (Sivan, 1985).

Such variable features of social structures as the level of economic development, the conditions of domestic economic production and its relationship with the world economy, the distribution of economic and political resources, the degree of occupational differentiation, and changes in the administrative bureaucratic structures of the state are certainly important in providing social resources for culture. Nonetheless, these factors do not provide enough clues to understand the content and direction of cultural change. This is true because similar social structures may sustain different cultural formations and different structures may support similar cultural movements.

Cultures as Systems

Part of the problem with the correspondence perspective is the conceptualization of culture as a unified system of values, norms, and rituals. There are, however, different systemic approaches to culture, depending on the operational meaning of the concept of system employed.

One uses the concept of adaptive system in order to explain the relationship between human communities and their ecological settings. Culture is viewed as the totality of the ways of life of communities, "all those means whose forms are not under direct genetic control . . . which serve to adjust individuals and groups within their ecological communities," according to Binford (as cited in Keesing, 1974, p. 75). Talcott Parsons (1964, 1966) portrays cultural change as a result of development in any or all of the subsystems of society that produces social differentiation. Social differentiation in turn leads to the emergence of a new set of problems that the old cultural pattern cannot resolve; a more general, rational, and systematic value pattern is thus necessary to provide the basis of social stability by cementing the emergent cleavages in society (Parsons, 1964, 1966; Sahlins & Service, 1960; Service, 1971).

Another conception considers cultures as cognitive systems, where cultures are said to provide the semantic, classificatory schema and codes for understanding the social and physical world. As Goodenough (1957) suggests, "Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them" (p. 167). Notable in this approach is Pike's (1954) distinction between emic and etic as two perspectives in the study of culture. The first, emic, refers to cultural explanations offered by the insiders or members of the culture being studied. It is explanations in terms of intrinsic cultural categories. Etic, on the other hand, explains culture in terms of extrinsic concepts employed by scientific observers. The third systematic view of culture is Lévi-Strauss's (1973) structural anthropology. For him, cultural systems rest on a set of binary opposites that constitute their organizing principles (i.e., structure). These binary opposites generate the shared symbolic systems people use to think about and explain the empirical reality they encounter. Geertz (1968, 1973) also considers cultures as symbolic systems, but these symbols and meanings are not in people's heads; rather, they have public presence and are shared by social actors. Their functions are understood, not in terms of deciphering their underlying binaries, but through the interpretation of the way they shape human action in the richness of concrete social contexts.

These theories are quite useful for advancing the conceptual tools for understanding cultures. Nonetheless, the key weakness in explaining cultural change is their systemic approach. This approach projects an image of culture as a coherent set of interrelated values, norms, symbols, and rituals. In reality, however, contemporary societies are heterogeneous and the cultural values and norms governing human behaviors in these societies are too varied and conflicting to be adequately captured in terms of a systemic conceptual framework.[15]

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[15] Alternative views of culture may be useful for readers. Among them are critiques of Geertz for conceptualizing cultures as text rather than material historical process that accounts for both synchronic analysis of culture, an analysis that is carried out at one time, and diachronic analysis, which focuses on the historical process of cultural change (Roseberry, 1982; Sewell, 1992, 1997). There is also Bourdieu's (1984) class theory of cultural distinctions. For Bourdieu, social classes shape people's cultural knowledge and style. Erickson (1996a, b) criticizes this approach and points to the fact that social classes differ in the amount rather than the content of the available cultural capital their members control.

Cultures as Repertoires of Conflicting Elements

This chapter draws on Swidler's (1986) conceptualization of culture "as a 'tool kit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (p. 273). This paper, however, argues that the culture of any society hardly constitutes a consistent set of values, norms, rituals, symbols, memories, and institutional principles. Rather, culture contains incongruent elements that often clash. In addition, the meaning of fundamental cultural values is derived from opposition to other cultural values that exist in the same culture. This means that multiple cultural schemas exist simultaneously in a social environment and can provide opposite messages about values, goals, and appropriate methods. Given these multiple conflicting schemas, any particular culture cannot be said to dictate decision-making and behavior in a certain direction. Instead, as Swidler discusses (1986, 2001), cultural models generally provide goals and strategies that people can choose from in making specific decisions. Thus, individuals can use one set of cultural elements in a particular circumstance and another set of elements in a different circumstance.

The existence of diverse cultural schemata, shaping different, if not conflicting, strategies of action, provides for potential perpetual conflicts in society. However, sociopolitical stability is ensured when a subset of cultural elements are formalized into a dominant discursive framework, make up the guiding principles of social order, and gain the appearance of permanency and taken-for-granted features of social order. The dominant discourse is maintained and protected by certain social institutions and watchdogs, but is ultimately sanctioned by state power.

For example, historical Islam, like other cultural traditions, has displayed contradictory elements. On a most abstract level, these elements may be uncovered by deconstructing Islamic tradition in terms of a series of binary oppositions. Among them are *wahy* (revelation) versus *'aql* (reason), *towhid* (divine unity) versus *shirk* (idol-worshipping), *shari'a* (Islamic law) versus *jahiliyya* (the state of ignorance), *dar ul-Islam* (the abode of Islam) versus *dar ul-harb* (the abode of war), *wilaya* (delegation by God) versus *mulk* (hereditary rule), *khilapha* (spiritual authority) versus *sultanate* (temporal authority), *umma* (universalistic Islamic community) versus *asabiyya* (particularistic tribal solidarity), and *Arabic* (as the sacred universal language) versus the *vernaculars* (locally spoken ethnic languages). These binary oppositions have informed debates about the nature of the true Islam and the Islamicity of the existing sociopolitical order.

These and other binary oppositions are not simply indicative of clashes between diverse systems of thought that are present in any culture. They also represent serious practical problems for the stability of sociopolitical order. To be more specific and considering only a subset of the above binary oppositions as examples, there have always been real conflicts between theologians who favored literal interpretations of the Quran (revelation) and practitioners of rational arguments (*aql*), between those who would offer allegiance only to the true caliph and those who bowed to the power of the self-appointed sultan or military commander, between believers in the universality of the *umma* and the ethnic or nationalist groups who did not want to forgo their distinctive way of life, and between believers in the sacredness of Arabic as the universal language of the faith and the non-Arab Muslims who desired to communicate in their own local vernaculars.

The religious norms constituting the pre-modern social order under the three empires of the Mughal (1526–1858) in the Indian subcontinent, the Safavids (1502–1736) in Iran, and the Ottomans (1299–1293) in Asia Minor, which sheltered almost the entire abode of Islam, were conditional resolutions of some of the tensions involved in the Islamic jurisprudence, political theory, and the administration of diverse Muslim subjects. However, understanding these resolutions is important—first, because they gave the three empires a recognizable religious pattern. Second, it was in opposition to these resolutions that Muslim intellectual leaders produced new ideas in response to the challenges of modernity and globalization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The resolutions of these tensions were formulated and institutionalized in terms of the nature of the social forces of the time and the dictates of political expediency. Thus, the tension between literalists and rationalists in Islamic jurisprudence was resolved by adopting a middle-ground approach. On the one hand, the resolution went beyond literalism by accepting the legality of four different schools of jurisprudence: the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali. Muslim theologians, in ruling on practical matters, were instructed to stay within the confines of one of these four schools. This means that the proof of rational arguments within the constraints of the different methodological frameworks that were laid down by these schools constituted an acceptable feature of the jurisprudence in historical Islam. On the other hand, the resolution blocked the further applications of reason by closing the gate of *ijtihad* or independent reasoning by theologians. In other words, Muslim theologians were prohibited from abandoning the methodologies of these schools and invent their own approach to Quranic exegesis.

Moreover, the Islamic theory of government that initially stressed that the caliph, political-cum-spiritual leader of Muslims, must come from Prophet Muhammad's tribe and required other qualifications was gradually relaxed by such prominent Muslim political theorists as Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Mawardi (972–1058), Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Taqi al-Din Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), and Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1333–1406). As a result, the Islamic theory of government changed in favor of recognizing the sultan's discretionary power. This change amounted to a de facto admission of the reality of secular politics. Nonetheless, the new political formula was predicated on the precept that the sultan was to protect the territorial integrity of the abode of Islam, maintain security, respect the ulama, and abide by *shari'a*, as understood by the ulama (Gibb, 1937, 1960; Rosenthal, 1958; Rizvi, 1975; Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Ibrahimi Dina'nie, 1991). Likewise, the Ottomans resolved the problem of nationality by devising the millet system in which religious minorities were allowed to enforce their own rule and customs in dealing with educational, religious, security, and other issues within their communities that were not addressed by the Ottoman central government (Shaw, 1977; Karpat, 1982). A similar policy of religious tolerance was pursued by some of the farsighted Safavid and Mughal rulers. Finally, the tension between Arabic and the vernaculars was resolved in a simple division of functions: Arabic became the exclusive language for understanding and interpreting religious texts, while non-Arabic languages such as Persian or Turkish were elevated as languages of the state and civic culture.

In the modern period, these and other accepted principles of social organization were challenged by intellectual leaders and turned into issues (e.g., principles of Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic theory of government and the sultan's discretionary power, the status of religious

minorities living under Muslim rules, and social status of women), and the manner in which these issues were resolved and the degree to which they were institutionalized shaped the form, depth, and breadth of cultural transformation of Muslim societies.

Episodic Discourse Model of Cultural Change

Cultural change is not an inevitable reflection of such changes in social conditions as economic transformation, the rise or decline of social classes, occupational differentiation, or political development. Rather, it is produced. The production of culture entails (1) the transformation of these principles into issues or the emergence of new sociopolitical and cultural issues as a result of discoveries in science and technological innovation, (2) intellectual leaders offering resolutions to these issues, and (3) these resolutions being accepted by a significant portion of the population, members of powerful groups or social classes, or the ruling elite. Thus, an important aspect of understanding cultural change involves understanding the actual process of issues resolution. Issues resolution is an essential aspect of ideological production. Explaining how ideologies are produced may contribute to a full or "mechanismic explanation" (Bunge, 1997, p. 410) of cultural change.

The production of sociopolitical ideas involves (1) the expression of opinions and beliefs, and (2) the dissemination and consumption of these opinions and beliefs. The first refers to the actual production of meanings, and the other to the reproduction of the conditions that sustain those meanings. Resources and social space, while crucial in the dissemination of ideas (Wuthnow, 1989), are factors *external* to ideological production. They constrain but do not explain the actual production of ideas or the specific content of what is being expressed and the methodology that is employed to produce ideas. These include conceptual innovation, the formulation of themes, the resolution of issues, and the shaping of the sociopolitical orientations of ideology.

The producers of sociopolitical ideas turn into issues such problems or features of social life as people's identity, the status of the economy and distribution of economic resources, poverty, social and cultural inequality, arbitrary rule, national security, the status of one's nation or community vis-à-vis another's, and people's spiritual needs. What requires explanation is how intellectual leaders offer resolutions to these issues. What factors affect their perceptions and thought processes that prompt them to select a particular approach among alternative possibilities? How, for example, do intellectual leaders resolve the issue of identity and economic difficulties? The problem is that identity may be defined in terms of one's religion, nationality, ethnicity, or language. Likewise, economic difficulties may be addressed in socialist terms, at one extreme, or giving tax incentives to the rich in order to promote investment in the country, at the other.

What intellectual leaders actually say about these and other issues, however, cannot be directly derived from the nature of these problems. For example, to stimulate the U.S. economy and increase the employment rate, one idea is to cut the government's spending and provide tax incentives to the rich or the so-called job creators. The other opposing idea is to increase taxation of the rich in order to finance the government's spending on infrastructural development. Of course, people's social positions constrain their expressions. An intellectual leader from a

humble background may be more sympathetic to a socialist idea than to the idea of competitive capitalism. Nonetheless, the same person living under Soviet totalitarianism may turn into an enthusiast of free market economy.

To give another example, for people born in Egypt, there may be only three possibilities for defining their primary identity: Egyptian, Arab, or Muslim/Christian. Nonetheless, it is crucially important to understand how under certain historical circumstances Egyptians define themselves primarily in national territorial terms (i.e., as Egyptians), while under other circumstances they do so in terms of language (i.e., as Arabs) or religion (i.e., as Muslims or Christians). In fact, there have been historical periods where Egyptians defined themselves as Egyptians, then as Arabs, and next as Muslims, and recently, after the overthrow of President Mubarak, again primarily as Egyptians. The first, Egyptian nationalism, occurred in the early twentieth century and was most eloquently presented by Mustafa Kamil (1874–1908): "Fatherland, O fatherland: To you my love and my heart. To you my life and my existence. To you my blood and my soul. To you my mind and my speech. . . . You, you, O Egypt are life itself, and there is no life but in you" (as cited in Safran, 1961, p. 87). Decades later, Egyptians, in harmony with the people of many other Arab countries, arose in defense of Arab nationalism. For the harbinger of pan-Arab nationalism, Sati' al-Husri (1880–1968), territorial nationalism is a product of European design:

> The division of the Arab provinces into several states took place because of the bargaining and ambitions of the foreign states, and not according to the views and interests of the people of the countries . . . . Is it possible for us to consider . . . the peoples of Syria as forming a true nation, different from the people of Iraq and Lebanon? . . . We must always assert that the Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Jordanians, Hejazis, and Yemenis all belong to one nation, the Arab nation. (As cited in Cleveland, 1971, p. 130)

Al-Husri glorifies military life as a valuable instrument in the service of the nation; it is a life of order and discipline, of sacrifice and altruism (p. 166). For him, solidarity and self-sacrifice are the means to realize the goals of Arab nations. Al-Husri gave primacy to the nation, beyond which individual freedom and happiness did not exist. "Patriotism and nationalism above and before all else, even above and before freedom" (pp. 167-170; see also Haim, 1955).

Finally, both forms of nationalism are flatly rejected by the intellectual leaders of radical Islamism. For example, Sayyid Qutb argues that:

> The homeland (*watan*) a Muslim should cherish and defend is not a mere piece of land; the collective identity he is known by is not that of a regime . . . . Neither is the banner he should glory in and die for that of a nation (*qawn*) . . . . His jihad is solely geared to protect the religion of Allah and His Shari'a and to save the Abode of Islam and no other territory . . . . A Muslim's homeland is any land governed by the laws of Islam. Islam is the only identity worthy of man . . . . Any other group identity . . . is a jahili [wrong] identity of the type humanity has known during its periods of spiritual decadence (as cited in Sivan, 1985, p. 31).

For people familiar with the history of Arab countries in the last century, the differences between these collective identities are terribly important; each implies a distinctive form of

government, generates varying sociopolitical and cultural attitudes, and identifies different criteria for in-group and out-group membership. The differences constitute varying types of political and cultural expression, having considerable historical consequences. Understanding how these expressions are made provides clues about how cultural change takes place.[16]

Targets and the Production of Discourse

Intellectual leaders develop their ideas vis-à-vis the conceptual framework, symbolic order, and ritualistic practices of competing ideological discourses. In addressing social problems, they reevaluate, revisit, or reject the claims, the arguments, and often the conceptual foundations of competing ideologies. At the same time, they beget responses, rebuttals, and counterarguments from their adversaries. Debates, back-and-forth discussions, and ideological disputations set the *internal* dynamic of ideological production, as each side of the debate structures the kind of argument its opponent is likely to advance against it. Each side constitutes the *target* of ideological production for the other.

A target is any set of discourses in opposition to which ideas are formulated. The target is the thing on which the attention of intellectual leaders is fixated. The nature of the target may vary from being a single discourse to a plurality of discourses. The constituting elements of the target itself can vary from being a simple set of ideas to complex theoretical or philosophical systems. The simplicity or the complexity of the target decides the level of sophistication, elegance, and rigor of the ideas being produced. The target may also vary in terms of its location in the society. The target discourse may be supported by people with organizations and power. These people may enjoy the support of the state, powerful groups, or social classes. This support enhances their power in controlling the means of cultural production. The target's social basis of support, including the extent to which it is connected to or dependent on significant social classes or the state, has considerable implications for shaping how oppositional ideologies are produced. It is the nature of the power of the target and location within the sociopolitical space of the social formation that determine the social or political orientation of the new ideology being produced. This is because the production of a new ideology involves not only a critique of the target ideology, but a critique of its institutional basis as well.

Pluralistic versus Monolithic Targets

If the target is characterized by diverse ideologies and, hence, intellectual pluralism, ideologies with a multiplicity of themes are likely to be produced. These ideologies tend to be

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[16] The broader theoretical framework in this chapter is based on the notion that expression takes place through the medium of signs. Although signs make reference to elements of social life, "they define and interrelate them in an 'arbitrary' manner, that is, in a manner that cannot be deduced from exigencies [of social life]. . . . The arbitrary status of a sign means that its meaning is derived not from its social referent—the signified—but from its relation to other symbols, or signifiers within a discursive code" (Alexander & Smith, 1993, pp. 156-57; Hawkes, 1997; de Saussure, 1983). Meanings are thus produced within the context of relationships among symbols (Blumer, 1969). "Understanding," in Holquist's (1990) explanation of Bakhtin, "comes about as a response to a sign with signs" (p. 49). Expressions are made, meanings come about, and ideas are produced in relation to other expressions, meanings, and ideas that are present, occupying simultaneous but different spaces (Holquist, 1990). This relationship is mutual—words are responded to with words, rituals with rituals, symbols with symbols, and body movement with body movement. Idea causes idea (Moaddel, 2005).

eclectic and moderate. If, on the other hand, the target includes only a single ideology, that is, a monolithic intellectual environment, then the new ideology tends to develop a set of centralized themes and display monistic and fundamentalist characteristics. Where there is cultural pluralism, the market of ideas is strengthened, expanded, and diversified. Cultural pluralism enhances competition among ideological groups. In this intellectual environment, ideological producers must "compete for the patronage of potential consumers of *Weltanschauungen*" (Berger & Luckmann, 1969, p. 70). To be successful in marketing their ideas, intellectual leaders must consider the diverse views of the adherents to competing ideologies. Given that ideologies are also subject to market forces, where people pick and choose among a variety of ideas that are available to them (Bainbridge, 1995; Finke & Stark, 1989), eclecticism and moderation may have a better chance of success in attracting interested audiences in a pluralistic context. Moreover, the presence of competing ideologies subjects ideological producers to crisscrossing ideas, reinforcing belief in the complexity of social life and directing ideological producers toward the development of synthetic models in which elements of competing ideologies are also taken into consideration. In a monolithic intellectual environment, on the other hand, ideological producers encounter a single, often unambiguous, dominant ideology. Their alternative idea is defined most often in terms of its opposition to the target. In a simplistic sense, the production of ideas in this context is driven by the assumption that whatever the ideology of the target is, it is not right. Ideological producers facing a monolithic target tend to overlook alternative possibilities in dealing with the same social problems. In attacking a monolithic target, they often tend to reproduce in a different form an idea system structurally similar to what they are criticizing.

It may thus be proposed that the higher the level of intellectual pluralism in a society, the higher the level of competitions among ideological groups, and the higher the likelihood of the production of an eclectic, general, and universalistic discourse. Also, the stronger the monolithic cultural environment, the stronger is the likelihood of the rise of a fundamentalist discourse.

The State and Ideological Outcomes

Intellectual markets are always regulated by the state or the dominant cultural authorities. This regulation may vary from the installation of a set of objective rules that are uniformly applied to all groups in society (e.g., the context of pluralistic democracy) to an extreme case where the authorities themselves have established a monopoly over the means of cultural expressions (e.g., the situation under the Islamic regime in Iran or Saudi Arabia). Cultural production tends to take a political or a social orientation depending on whether the source of this regulation comes from the state or influential cultural (or religious) institutions outside the state. Thus, considering the location of the target in the sociopolitical space of society, if the target is loosely connected to the state or the ruling elite remains indifferent to ideological debates, then ideological production is confined to civil society and tends to remain predominantly social and nonpolitical in orientation. Nonpolitical targets beget apolitical oppositional response. Finally, if the target is closely connected to the state, or the ruling elite extensively intervenes in cultural affairs to promote a certain ideology, then ideological production becomes politicized and tends to develop a political orientation. This is the context where political ideologies emerge.

We may propose that the closer the target is to state power, the higher the likelihood of the rise of oppositional political ideologies. That is, the greater the state's intervention in culture, the higher the likelihood of the rise of political ideologies and the lower the state's intervention in culture, the higher the likelihood of the rise of social ideologies.

Thus, the cross-tabulation of the two variables generates a two-by-two table with four possibilities: (1) moderate social ideologies, (2) moderate political ideologies, (3) militant social ideologies, and (4) militant political ideologies (Table 1).

Table 1

The Target, the State, and Ideological Outcomes

State's Connection to the Target	Target	
	Pluralistic	*Monolithic*
Target Loosely Linked to State (low state intervention in culture)	1) Moderate social ideologies (e.g., Islamic modernism in late nineteenth-century Egypt and India)	3) Militant social ideologies (e.g., counter-cultural, or sectarian movements, the rise of Babi religious movement in mid-nineteenth-century Iran)
Target Strongly Linked to State (high state intervention in culture)	2) Moderate political ideologies (e.g., liberalism and nationalism in Algeria and Egypt; Arabism in Syria, both in the early twentieth century)	4) Militant political ideologies (e.g., political extremism, Islamic fundamentalism in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, and Syria, all in the second half of the twentieth century)

Ideology as Episodic Discourse

Meaning is produced within the context of the present. The present in the lives of the ideological producers is a niche generated by their emotional energy, cultural capital, network, and socioeconomic status. These factors always undergo changes, but the changes are often minor and incremental. There are occurrences in the individual lives of every ideological producer. These occurrences are also of small magnitude, and life appears continuous. The continuity of life, however, is interrupted by dramatic events that may cause a change in the social order or in people's perception of existing social arrangements. By causing ruptures in social structure, events may bring a new "regime of signification" (Lash, 1990, pp. 4-5) to prominence. This regime then forms the ideological target in opposition to which new discourses are produced and disseminated in the social environment.

Alternatively, by dramatically affecting human emotion, an event may prompt intellectual leaders to seriously re-examine their cherished beliefs and formulate new ideas. The interim between such events constitutes an episode: a bounded historical process that has a beginning and an end, and displays certain distinctiveness by virtue of its difference from the preceding and

following episodes. Episodes begin and end with such events as a military coup, a significant social and political upheaval, the outbreak of a war or a revolution, dramatic changes in the government's policies, a sudden economic swing, or an important innovation, whether indigenously created or imported. These events have significance because they provide empirical data in relation to which ideological producers confirm or negate a given system of ideas. Such historical events, says William Sewell, Jr. (1996), "tend to transform social relations. . . . [T]hey reshape history, imparting an unforeseen direction to social development and altering the nature of the causal nexus in which social interactions take place" (p. 843).

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Historically Significant Issues and Cultural Episodes

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To demonstrate the fruitfulness of the episodic-discourse model for understanding cultural change, this paper discusses several cases of cultural changes in the contemporary Middle East. It focuses on the set of historically significant issues that were the concerns of both intellectual leaders and the public at large. It then presents the resolutions of these issues in terms of the characteristics of the ideological targets that were dominant in these societies. Finally, it points to the role of historically significant events in bringing about new cultural episodes in different Middle Eastern countries.

Historically Significant Issues

The Middle East has undergone profound social changes since the nineteenth century. Significant among these changes were the decline of traditional social institutions, the development of capitalism, the integration of national economy into the world capitalist structure, globalization, the decline of old and rise of new social classes, expansion of secular education, and the formation of the modern state with massive administrative bureaucracy. While these changes have been diverse, the issues that were the concerns of both intellectual leaders and the public at large have remained remarkably invariant. Among them are:

1. The form of government
2. The relationship between religion and politics
3. The nature of the Western world
4. Bases of identity
5. The appropriate economic model
6. The status of women
7. The proper form of political activity

The manner in which these issues were resolved produced different cultural episodes, including Islamic modernism, constitutionalism and anti-clerical secularism, liberal nationalism, Arabism and pan-Arab nationalism, and fundamentalism. In Islamic modernism, for example, Islamic political theory and democracy are reconciled, Western culture is acknowledged favorably, a feminist exegesis of the Quran is advanced in order to defend women's rights, and a reformist method of political action is recommended (Moaddel, 1993, 2005). In Islamic fundamentalism, by contrast, constitutional law is abandoned in favor of the unity of religion and

politics in Islamic government, Western culture is portrayed as decadent, gender inequality is endorsed, and a revolutionary method of change is prescribed.

Not all of these issues constituted the primary concerns of intellectual leaders or were equally important in their perception of an ideal social order. When intellectual leaders addressed all of these issues, as did Islamic modernists or fundamentalists, the ensuing cultural episodes were comprehensive. In other cases when only a subset of these issues were the concern of culture producers, movements with specific missions such as Arab unity in pan-Arab nationalism emerged. Issues, however, are resolved in oppositional relation to the nature of the ideological target dominant in the sociopolitical environment and the relation of the target to power.

Events, Target, and Issues Resolution

Table 2 summarizes the events marking the ushering in of a new cultural episode, the targets of ideological production, and ideological resolution. Because of its significance as one of the most dynamic and prolific intellectual movements in contemporary Islam, the Islamic modernist movement in late nineteenth-century India is also included in this table. This intellectual-cum-theological development in Islam emerged following the Sepoy (Indian army in British India) mutiny in 1857–1859.

Islamic Modernism in Egypt and India

Begun in the second part of the nineteenth century, the Islamic modernist movement was a remarkable intellectual development. A group of like-minded Muslim scholars critically re-examined the classical conceptions and methods of jurisprudence and formulated a new approach to Islamic theology and Quranic exegesis. The central theological problems that engaged these thinkers revolved around the question of the validity of the knowledge derived from sources external to Islam and the methodological adequacy of the four traditional sources of jurisprudence: the Quran, the dicta attributed to the Prophet (*hadith*), the consensus of the theologians (*ijma*), and juristic reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*). The scholars resolved to reinterpret the first two sources and to transform the last two in order to formulate a reformist project in light of the prevailing standards of scientific rationality and modern social theory. Such prominent intellectuals and theologians as Sayyid Jamal ud-Din al-Afghani, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Chiragh Ali, Muhammad Abduh, Amir Ali, Shibli Nu'mani, and their associates and disciples presented Islamic theology in a manner consistent with modern rationalist ideas. Some of these thinkers portrayed Islam as compatible with deistic and natural religion. They were impressed by the achievements of the West, ranging from scientific and technological progress, the Newtonian conception of the universe, Spencer's sociology, and Darwinian evolutionism to Western lifestyles. They all argued that Islam, as a world religion, was thoroughly capable of adapting itself to the changing conditions of every age, the hallmark of the perfect Muslim community being law and reason.

Table 2

Episodes and Discourses in Contemporary Middle East and India

Events	Targets of Ideological Production	Issues Resolution: Ideological Outcome
India: Sepoy mutiny (1857–1859)	Islamic orthodoxy, Christian missionaries, Westernizers, and European Enlightenment	Islamic modernism
Egypt: Napoleon's invasion (1798–1801)	Islamic orthodoxy, Ottoman's Islamism, Christian missionaries, European Enlightenment	The rise of liberal age, early development of Islamic modernism
Egypt: Assembly of delegates (1866), Urabi rebellion (1879–1882), British occupation (1882–1914)	British colonialism, Christian missionaries, Westernizers, Islamic orthodoxy, European Enlightenment	The rise of liberalism and nationalist thought, Islamic modernism
Syria: Crisis of 1860, Turkish Sultan Abdülhamid despotic rule (1876–1908)	Ottoman's pan-Islamism, Islamic orthodoxy	Liberal Arabism and anti-authoritarian discourse
Iran: Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911)	Monarchical absolutism and ulama obstructionism	Anticlerical secularism, modern nationalism
Egypt: Economic bust of the 1930s following the economic boom of the 1920s	Authoritarianism of nationalist leaders, domination of nationalist Wafd party, political domination of landowners and capitalists	Crisis and decline of liberalism, the rise of pan-Arab nationalism, the rise of Muslim Brothers
Military coups: Egypt 1952, Iran 1953, Syria 1963, 1970s shift in state's policies in Algeria	Expansion in state bureaucracy, monolithic secular discourse, Western domination	Decline of secularism, rise of extremism and Islamic fundamentalism
Iranian Revolution (1977–1979)	Religious state and monolithic religion, clerical absolutism and "representative" institutions	Decline of Islamic fundamentalism and the rise of reformism

The discourse of Islamic modernism was an outcome of the efforts of Muslim intellectual leaders to resolve issues facing their faith and communities. These issues were crystallized as diverse ideological groups contended for intellectual control of Egypt and India. Prominent among these contenders were the orthodox ulama, who tried to defend their long-held privileged positions, Christian missionaries, Westernizers connected to the colonial administrations, and followers of the Enlightenment.

Islamic modernisms in these two countries were predominantly social discourses. Although they were under British domination, the colonial authorities did not intervene in cultural affairs. As a result, intellectual debates among different contenders remained confined to

civil society. In places like nineteenth-century Iran, where the society was under the ulama-monarch alliance, or Algeria, where the French extensively intervened in the country's cultural affairs, the Islamic modernist movements displayed a fairly strong yet moderate political orientation.

Iran: Anti-clerical Secularism and Constitutionalism

In the late nineteenth century, Iran experienced the rise of sociopolitical movements for reform. These movements culminated in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, when the absolutist monarch was forced to sign the Fundamental Law of the Constitution. The Constitutional Revolution contained both anti-clerical secularism and anti-authoritarianism features. These features were developed in oppositional relation to two major obstacles Iranian intellectual leaders and activists faced in their struggle for reform. One was the discourse of monarchical absolutism, and the other was the obstructionism of the orthodox Shi'i ulama. Backed by their powerful religious institutions, financial power, and ties to the government, the ulama resisted reforms proposed by state officials in the nineteenth century and defended their control of the educational institutions and the judiciary.

Monarchical absolutism appeared to have provoked awareness among these leaders of the desirability of constitutionalism and liberal politics. And ulama obstructionism promoted the idea that Iran is better served if the power of the clerical establishment is curtailed.

In the same way that the pan-Islamic despotism of Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid gave rise to liberal Arabism in Syria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the religious-monarch alliance in Iran provided a favorable context for the emergence and popularity of constitutional thought among Iranian intellectual leaders in the same general period.

Iran: Economic Nationalism and the National Front

During the hiatus between the Allies' invasion of Iran in 1941 and the British-U.S.-engineered coup in 1953 that reinstalled the Shah, the country experienced an episode of liberal nationalism. This nationalism was predominantly economic nationalism. The liberal nationalist movement culminated in the formation of the National Front under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddiq in the late 1940s.

The ideology of the National Front was shaped in oppositional relation to two dominant powers in mid-twentieth-century Iran. One was the British, who dominated the Iranian oil industry, the country's most important natural resource and the state's main source of revenue. The other was the absolutism of the monarch. Because the religious institutions had lost considerable power in the first half of the twentieth century, they no longer constituted a major target of ideological attack by the country's intellectual leaders.

These two forms of domination gave rise to economic nationalism: the idea that the nationalization of the British-controlled Iranian oil industry and protection of the national economy were the key to Iran's economic development and prosperity. The monarch's absolutism, although modern in orientation, gave impetus to the continued dominance of liberal

oppositional discourse, as the leaders of the National Front pushed forward the idea that the Shah must reign, not rule.

Syria: Liberal Arabism

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Syria experienced the rise of liberal Arabism. This political discourse had two distinctive features. One was an emphasis on Arabic language and the notion that the Arab-speaking population of the Middle East constitutes a people—that is, a nation, who have the right to organize their own political community. The other feature of liberalism stressed that despotic rule not only destroys individual character, but is dysfunctional for religion as well. As one of the most prominent harbingers of liberal Arabism, Abdul Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849–1903) argued that tyranny is the willful and arbitrary conduct of public affairs without the fear of retribution. In his view, the tyrant would keep people ignorant, fear science and its products (but would not fear the theological sciences), promote false honors, facilitate the accumulation of wealth, turn individuals into hypocrites who falsely profess virtue and religion, shield villains from criticism and exposure, and destroy individual willpower. Tyrannical rule would thus corrupt every class, type of society, and individual (Haim, 1954).

The liberal feature of Arabism was developed, as it were, in opposition to the pan-Islamic despotism of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1908), while the Arab nationalist awareness was a response to the rise of Turkish nationalism led by the Committee of Union and Progress, formed in 1907 (Dawn, 1973; Haim, 1962; Zeine, 1973).

The Arab World (1930–1960): Pan-Arab Nationalism

In the 1930s, a shift occurred in the political discourse of Arab political thinkers. This shift was a departure from the liberal Arabism of the early twentieth century toward a radical pan-Arab nationalism for the establishment of a single Arab state. This shift paralleled the changes in the nature of the ideological targets faced by these thinkers. Liberal Arabism was a response first to Sultan Abdülhamid's pan-Islamic despotism and then to the rise of Turkish nationalism. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923 had removed the issues of Turkification, the centralization of power, the sultan's arbitrary rule, and the evils of despotism from the intellectual agenda of Arab thinkers. There was no arbitrary behavior of the sultan to inspire demands for constitutional rule, and no Turkification and Turkish nationalism to inspire glorification of the Arabic language.

Instead, there were the French and British mandates which were imposed on the Arab world between the two World Wars. In the perception of Arab leaders, these mandates were illegitimate from the start. The more the French and British arbitrarily divided and reorganized the Arab territories into different states, the stronger the desire among Arab intellectual leaders to reunite all of the Arab peoples into a single pan-Arab political order became. The more these colonial powers remained impervious to the demands of the nationalist leaders, who were quite moderate in the 1920s and 1930s, for the independence of their countries, the more radicalized the Arab nationalist movements became.

Pan-Arab nationalism was thus a reaction to the post-World War I colonial partitioning of the Arab lands into arbitrary states, the imposition of the French mandate on Syria and Lebanon (1920–1945), the British mandate on Iraq (1920–1932), territorial cession from Syria to Turkey, and the Western-backed establishment of the state of Israel. All of this gave rise to the feeling that Arabs were frequently and collectively mistreated by colonial powers and hence signified the notion of Arabs as one people in the perception of the indigenous intellectual leaders (Chartouni-Dubarry, 1993; Cleveland, 1971; Dawisha, 2003; Dawn, 1988; Haim, 1962; Khalidi, Anderson, & Simon, 1991; Khoury, 1983, 1987; Moaddel, 2005; Tripp, 2000).

Egypt, Algeria, and Iraq: Foreign Occupation and Territorial Nationalism

Foreign occupation was one of the key factors contributing to the emergence of territorial nationalism in Algeria and Egypt in the early twentieth century. These two countries were under the French and British occupation, respectively, during this period (Hourani, 1983; Marsot, 1968; Moaddel, 2005; Ruedy, 1992; Wendell, 1972).

A series of values surveys carried out in Iraq between 2004 and 2011 provide further support for the arguments that foreign occupation prompts nationalism. The U.S. occupation appears to have contributed to the rise of Iraqi nationalism, as the percentage of Iraqis who defined themselves as "Iraqis above all" (as opposed to Muslims, Arabs, or Kurds) steadily increased from 23% in 2004 to 63% in 2008, and then dropped slightly to 57% in 2011, as shown in Figure 1.
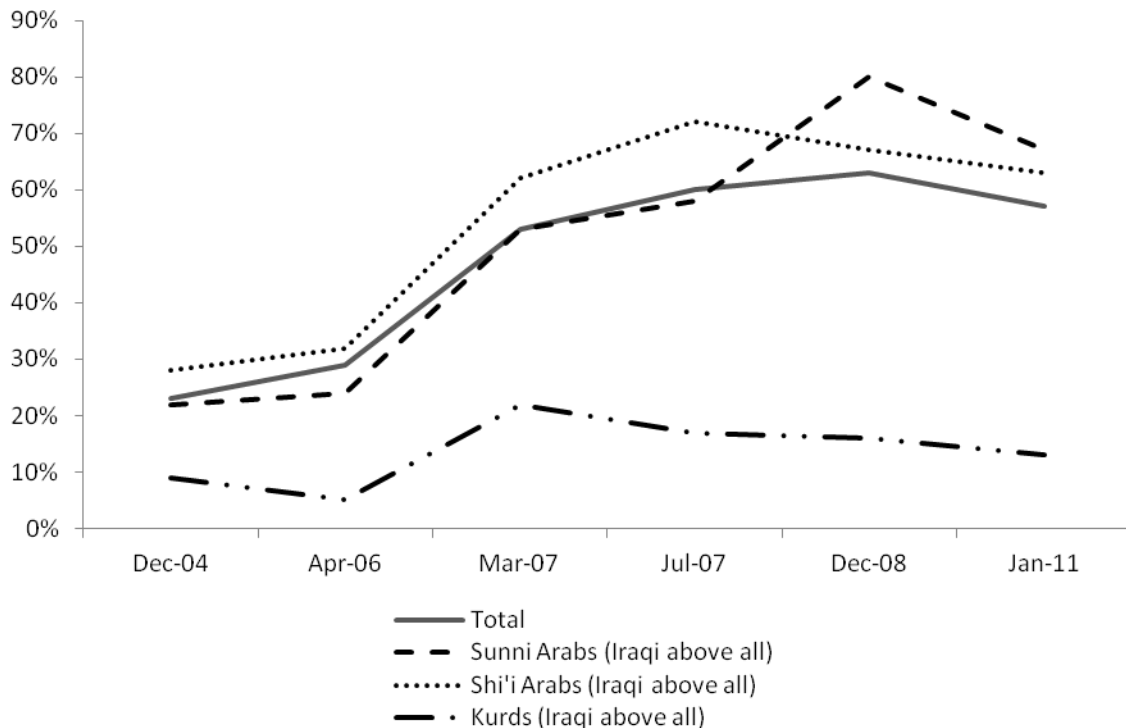

Figure 1. **Percent Iraqi respondents defining selves as Iraqis above all by ethnicity/sect.**

Islamic Fundamentalism

Islamic fundamentalism first emerged in Egypt, when the Society of Muslim Brothers was formed in 1928. This religious movement was in response to the secularism of the interventionist state. It included the Egyptian liberal nationalist state of the 1920-30s, the Nasserite Arab nationalism, the socialist states in Algeria and Syria, and the pro-Western state of the Pahlavis in Iran. All of these states commonly followed a secularist ideology that considered religion inimical to progress. In these countries, nationalist intellectuals and policymakers did not confine their activities to the realm of politics. They narrowed the cultural and social spheres of religious institutions, reformed the educational institutions to undermine the influence of religion, and imposed feminism from above.

Islamic fundamentalism took an aggressive and violent turn in several Middle Eastern countries in the second half of the twentieth century, when militaries overthrew liberal regimes and imposed a monolithic ideological discourse on their societies from above. In Egypt, for example, the 1952 military coup set the stage for the rise of religious extremism. One of the spokespeople for the growing religious extremism was Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who rejected the Islamicity of the existing order and depicted Egypt as a throwback to the state of the ignorance (*jahiliyya*) that, in the Muslim view, had characterized the conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia. His disciple, Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–1982), further claimed that the current rulers of Islamic countries were all apostates and should be overthrown in order to establish a truly Islamic order. The 1953 military coup in Iran that overthrew the liberal regime of Premier Mosaddeqh led to the rise of a secular ideological authoritarian state that also contributed to the radicalization of Shi'ism (Akhavi, 1980; Kepel, 1985; Lia, 1998; Moaddel, 1993, 2005; Sivan, 1985).

Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia: Religious Regimes and Secular Values

In Iran today, Western liberal values and the idea of secular politics have become attractive to a significant sector of Iranians. This development has been, as it were, in reaction to the religious fundamentalism of the ruling Islamic regime. Findings from national values surveys carried out in Iran in 2000 and 2005 have shown a shift in values among Iranians toward national identity, gender equality, social individualism, and democracy (Moaddel, 2009).

Findings from national values surveys carried out in Saudi Arabia in 2003 and 2011 also signify a major shift in the political, religious, and social values of the Saudi public. For example, the percentage of Saudis who defined themselves as Saudis above all, rather than Muslims or Arabs, jumped from 17% in 2003 to 46% in 2011, while the percentage of those claiming a primary Muslim identity dropped from 75% to 44%. Those considering it "very important" for government to implement sharia declined from 69% in 2003 to 31% to 2011. On the other hand, those who considered democracy as the best form of government increased considerably from 50% in 2003 to 70% in 2011.

Finally, in Iraq, the rise of Shi'i political parties and religious extremism contributed to the desirability of secular politics, as the percentage of Iraqis who agreed that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated increased from 50% in 2004 to about 70% in

2011 (Figure 2). Thus, it appears that in the case of Iraq, in the same way that foreign domination contributed to the rise of national identity, religious domination roused a secular response.
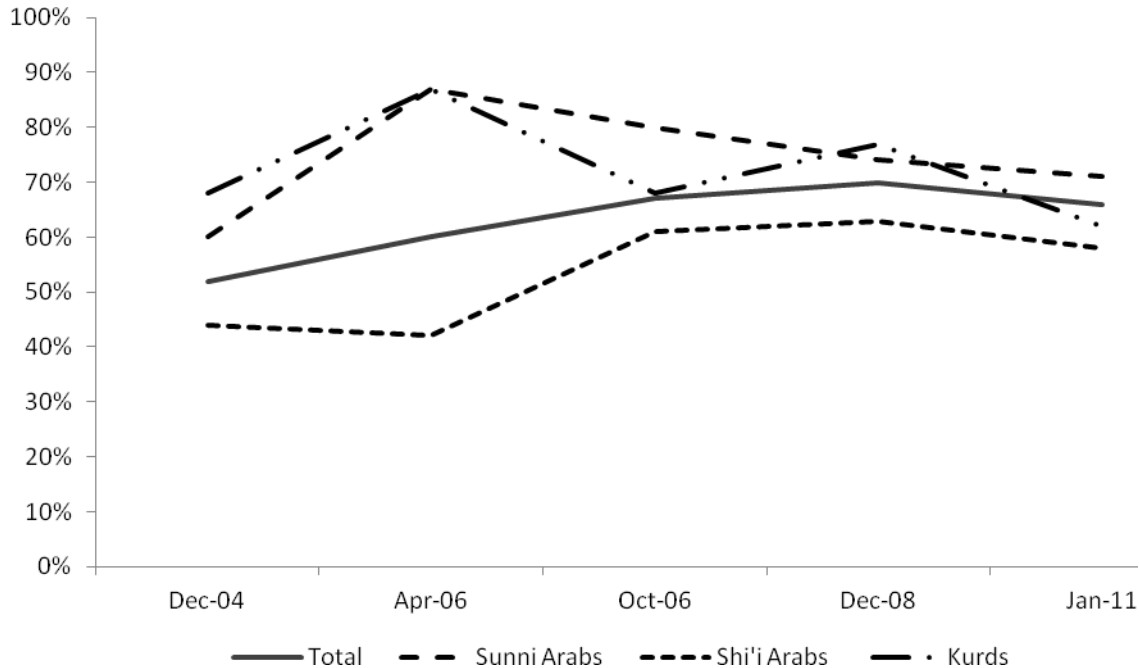
Figure 2. **Percent Iraqi respondents "strongly agreeing" or "agreeing" that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated.**

Conclusion

This paper suggested a model to explain and predict cultural change. It argued that cultures constitute a toolkit of values, norms, rituals, symbols, and memories. These cultural elements, while interrelated, are partly harmonious and partly incongruent. They often clash with one another. Therefore, culture as a whole does not dictate decision-making and behavior of individuals. Rather, at any given period, only a subset of cultural elements are institutionalized and grounded in organizational routine, enacted in periodic rituals, constituted in the discursive framework that shape political and cultural expressions, and ultimately sanctioned by the state power. In historical Islam, for example, the methodological principles of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the recognition of the sultan's discretionary power, the ulama-monarch alliance, and the regulations regarding the status of religious minorities living within Islamic dominion were only a subset of cultural elements that became the constituting parts of the dominant culture in major Islamic countries in the pre-modern period.

Cultural change occurs when these dominant cultural elements are turned into issues. The manner in which these issues are resolved may decide the content and direction of cultural

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change. Thus, one way to understand and predict cultural change is to: (1) identify the number and the nature of issues that are being debated in society, (2) describe the structure of cultural domination in society—whether this structure is monolithic or diversified—and who in society sets the cultural agenda and policies (is it the state, the media, the think-tanks connected to powerful social classes, or the religious institutions?), and (3) identify the people or institutions that are culturally dominant in society and assess their connection to the state. The outbreak of major events is important in rearranging the sociopolitical forces in society, causing a change in people's attention.

The model suggested in this paper departs from the premises of the correspondence perspective that relate cultural change to such changes in social structure as economic development, occupational differentiation, changes in class relations and group formation, and political transformation. At the same time, by arguing that cultural changes are the outcome of the efforts of both intellectual leaders and the ordinary public to resolve some of the fundamental issues facing their communities and faith, the model employed in this paper departs from a text-based analysis of culture. It would be quite misleading to try to explain people's cultural behaviors and institutional practices in terms of an interpretation of, for example, religious texts.

The analytical framework suggested in this paper will also have considerable practical relevance. Issues can be identified. People's attitudes toward issues are measurable. The role of the existing state and non-state actors in culture may be observed and assessed. The possible link between changes in people's attitudes toward significant issues and the changes in state policies or the behavior of politically powerful social groups and classes can be evaluated. As a result, it may be possible to make rational guesses about the direction of cultural change.

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Chapter 8

The Reverse Assessment of Asymmetric Warfare

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The term *asymmetric warfare* is used to describe unconventional tactics of warfare. During past military engagements when conventional methods of warfare were used between rival armies, senior military leadership had some notion of predictability or degree of certainty when planning counter strategies against large-scale conventional armies. Such counter-strategies were based on known patterns of opposition troop movements or used to counter known weapon systems. In more recent military engagements, analysts note a shift in adversarial adaptability process in which the adversary incorporates unconventional methods of warfare, utilizing known variables to the adversary yet unknown variables to the opposing force. Such variables may include the use of the environment, local population support or the use of existing transit routes. This results in the opposing force being somewhat disadvantaged, as it may not be as well educated as locals when operating in foreign environments.

When assessing such situations, analysts should consider the question, is asymmetric warfare really asymmetric? The answer to this may be summed up in one word, "adaptability," or perhaps a lack of understanding of the concept of adversarial adaptability. Often the operational environment suggests the term "asymmetric warfare" where non-conventional warfare takes place. Yet, because tactics implemented by adversaries do not resemble those of conventional warfare, the West chooses to categorize the tactics as asymmetric. This is misleading.

To adversaries, tactics implemented to fight against coalition forces are those that have been adapted to suit the needs of the current environment or situation. From the adversary's perspective, such tactics not only seem practical but are necessary to compensate for their lack of sophisticated capabilities. To the West such tactics seem asymmetric as they do not resemble those of modern conventional warfare.

The Tool of Asymmetric Warfare

The theory of asymmetric warfare is not a new concept. A reasonable argument can be made that all wars are asymmetric as there is no evidence which suggests equally trained, equally equipped armies have fought against one another. However, this assessment focuses on the variables that contribute to the destabilization of environments and highlights an inherent need to understand the process of adversarial adaptability as it relates to the current operational environment. Security experts today should consider asymmetric warfare to be a result of circumstances stemming from the deterioration of political, economic, and social welfare within a specific region, rather than a result of direct military engagement. Such conditions leave affected regions weak and susceptible to nefarious groups seeking to establish themselves as a hegemonic presence.

History has provided several examples where asymmetric tactics have been incorporated by various groups out of a need to compensate for a lack of professionally trained, well-equipped armies. At the beginning of the American Revolutionary War and prior to France's support, George Washington incorporated forms of asymmetric warfare out of necessity. At the time, General Washington did not have a professionally trained, well-equipped colonial army to battle against the heavily equipped, professional British Army. Yet, the United States prevailed against the British. How? Recognizing his lack of capabilities, Washington adapted tactics and sought to incorporate a wide scale of intelligence operations. His tactics included disinformation campaigns, counterintelligence operations, espionage and, most important, the use of indigenous Indians throughout the Northeast. Tribes which included Tuscarora and Oneida Indians knew the terrain and understood trade routes and weather patterns better than experienced generals of the British Army. Although skeptical about the use of Indians whom he fought against during the French and Indian War, Washington recognized the value in this method of warfare and sought to capitalize on this opportunity and adapt tactics to his advantage.

Would this be considered asymmetric warfare or a necessity? To Washington, this was a necessity, as his militia was not as well equipped or well trained as King George's professional army. Yet, to King George's army, this resembled more unconventional methods of warfare. Subsequently, with the use of unconventional methods, General Washington was able to prevail against King George's professional army.

Similarly, Pakistan utilized asymmetric tactics in Afghanistan during the 1990s. After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, various militant groups sought to establish themselves as the hegemonic presence within the country. At the height of the Afghanistan civil war of 1992 to 1996, on October 19, 1993, Benazir Bhutto began her second term as Pakistan's Prime Minister. Recognizing the unstable security environment on its western border, Pakistan was eager to help produce a friendly government in historically unfriendly Kabul. Capitalizing on vulnerabilities, Pakistan recognized an opportunity to support exiled Afghan religious leaders studying in Pakistani madrassas during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. With Pakistan's financial, material, and military support, these Taliban fighters, under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar, took Kabul and quickly became the predominant power in Afghanistan (Schmidt, 2009). Prime Minister Bhutto understood Pakistan had a unique opportunity to leverage control over the Taliban and use militants as a tool to create a more hospitable, tolerant government toward Pakistan. With continued support of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Taliban became the powerful, governing force within Afghanistan. Would this be considered asymmetric tactics or necessity? It depends on whom you ask. To Pakistan, it was necessary in order to alleviate destabilization on its western border and further solidify its political influence within a historically unfriendly Afghanistan. To the West, it resembled asymmetric tactics.

As years passed, splinter groups from the Afghan Taliban began to filter across the porous Afghanistan border into Pakistan. Armed with weapons left over from the Soviet–Afghan war, newly established Pakistani Taliban members began to create safe havens within the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan. Loosely governed, the Pakistani Taliban expanded their network and filtered into neighboring regions, including the North West

Frontier Provence (NWFP) to the east and Baluchistan to the south. Thus, the creation of the Pakistani Taliban was established. Unfortunately, the repercussions the United States is currently facing inside Afghanistan today are a direct result of Pakistan's longstanding relations in fostering and training Taliban militants (Mazzetti & Schmitt, 2009). Ironically, a separatist wing of the Afghan Taliban, an organization which Benazir Bhutto helped create and support during the early 1990s, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), was identified by the United Nations as a key suspect in her assassination on December 27, 2007 (United Nations, 2010).

If there is one lesson to be gleaned from the current operational environment, it is the notion that indigenous populations understand the needs of the local population better than any large-scale foreign army. Insurgencies are local and as such no one knows better the tools they have to work with (or more important, what they do not have to work with) than the local population. Thus, understanding the adversary's process to adapt to political, economic, or social welfare constraints becomes the crucial variable in implementing countermeasures. Nefarious groups will seek to capitalize on weak or vulnerable regions by implementing their own form of security throughout a susceptible region or by providing their own form of social welfare in an attempt to garner support from local populations.

The assessment of the insurgency's adaptability process must consider the non-military variables of asymmetric war, such as the economic, political, or social structure of the region, which may render regions weak and susceptible to destabilization after a military engagement has occurred. Such variables include political, economic, and social structures of conflicts that have the potential to foster and support further regional destabilization. A highlighted example of this would be Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew in 1989 and the inevitable power vacuum that ensued shortly thereafter, leading to civil war. Without a stable political system, well-trained military or security apparatus or economic growth and stability, Afghanistan was seemingly left to its own devices, which unfortunately resulted in helping to create a safe haven for Taliban and Al Qaeda to operate unencumbered.

The Power Vacuum

A hallmark characteristic of several terrorist organizations is that when the leader of the organization is removed, remaining elements throughout the organization will revert from an autonomous down to a semi-autonomous decision-making process. With no clear orders received from a top-down communication structure, remaining elements will seek to act on their own accord until a power figure of the organization emerges. This leads to power vacuums where control of the organization in itself could be a key destabilizing factor. If recognized as such early on, this could be used to the Coalition Forces' advantage. Exploiting weaknesses or vulnerabilities within an already fractured organization could have the potential of swaying the balance in favor of securing coalition objectives within a specific area.

On the other hand, there is nothing more dangerous than an armed organization that closely resembles a band of criminals, as there may be no ideology behind its actions. Thus, with no ideology associated with violent acts other than criminal, nefarious intent, there is nothing to target, no center of gravity to focus on. This was evident with Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone during the 1990s, as he ran a large network of criminals rather than an ideologically driven

terrorist organization. This proved to be a highly dangerous and destabilizing scenario. If Coalition Forces choose to capitalize on the destabilization of a fractured organization, think carefully because the outcome could go one way or another. Can the momentum of destabilization within the fractured organization be controlled and leveraged to Coalition Forces' advantage, or will the balance shift toward more isolated pockets of unrest perpetrated by a few armed groups with criminal, nefarious intent?

If understood at an indigenous level the tools insurgents do not have to work with, then insight can be gained into insurgencies' adaptability process. Questions analysts should consider: What are the immediate needs of the insurgency and to what extent can that need (or set of needs) be exploited and leveraged by outside political influences which may serve in the best interest of that state or have a negative impact against United States national security interests? Further, to what extent can that need or lack of capability be controlled? Though it seems fundamental, this process is key to exploiting weaknesses or vulnerabilities to the Coalition Forces' advantage. For example, when asked to comment on capabilities of a weapon system an analyst should not necessarily look at the weapon from the standpoint of what it can do. Rather, they should be more interested in what it cannot do so as to exploit this vulnerability to an advantage and capitalize on the weapon system's weaknesses. Such is the same methodology one should use when assessing insurgencies or terrorist organizations. Analysts should be more interested in the lack of capabilities rather than focus on capabilities, which will ultimately identify weaknesses and vulnerabilities of the group and provide insight into how a particular group may adapt when operating in a resource-constrained environment.

The Reverse Assessment

Understanding probability sets of adapting to an environment is a fundamental assessment tool. Though unconventional, this type of analysis is noticeably absent from today's more contemporary assessment methods. Most methods focus on capabilities, rather than lack of capabilities. Unfortunately, focusing only on insurgents' capabilities ultimately leaves gaps in countermeasures due to the adaptability variable being removed from the equation. At best, it is difficult to assess with any degree of accuracy probability sets without first understanding an insurgency's ability to adapt to circumstances stemming from a lack of capabilities. In today's environment, it may prove more beneficial to look at the situation from the perspective of what insurgents are not capable of doing and assess insurgents' process to adapt to their environment rather than continue to focus on the insurgents' capabilities. In doing so, analysts gain a unique opportunity to assess who within the region of destabilization has the most to gain by leveraging their political, economic, or social influence in order to effect political change. With this insight, analysts should gain perspective into variables that contribute to weak or vulnerable regions and how such variables may foster and support nefarious activity.

The consequences Pakistan is facing today as a result of its support of the Afghan Taliban during the mid-1990s and the subsequent emergence of the splinter militant organization Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) should serve as a warning to those who seek to create political change through support of militant groups inside weak or vulnerable regions of the world without first identifying those groups' potential to adapt and overcome weaknesses imposed by political, economic, or social constraints. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of an insurgency's

adaptability process has proven to be costly for Pakistan, as today the TTP remains one of Pakistan's primary domestic concerns. Thus, understanding the adaptability process of insurgencies seeking to overcome their lack of capabilities becomes the key to leveraging sustainable stability within a weak or vulnerable region.

Weak States versus Failed States

A common misperception in the global security community is that if a state is poor or impoverished, it is weak. It is important to categorize the differences between weak states and failed states, as the differences between the two are salient in the analysis of measuring vulnerabilities. Though weak states possess a level of fragility, they pale in comparison to failed states and the security dilemmas failed states impose upon the global security community. In weak states, there is a minute degree of ability to thwart off security threats; however, failed states have no ability to thwart off such security threats. Thus weak states are less susceptible than failed states to groups who seek to capitalize on opportunities and establish safe havens for nefarious activity. Although many states throughout the world are impoverished, poverty alone does not indicate a state is weak. According to Eizenstat, Porter, and Weinstein (2005), weakness of states can be measured according to lapses in three critical functions that the governments of all strong, stable states perform: "security, the provision of basic services, and protection of essential civil freedoms" (p. 3).

The degree to which a particular government is able to provide these basic necessities indicates a state's strength or weakness. In measuring the state's relevant capabilities, vulnerabilities and weaknesses become more apparent. Robert Rotberg (2003) indicates, "It is according to their performance—according to their levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial political goods—that strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed states" (p. 2). Though multiple variables, such as economic growth rates versus population growth rates, contribute to the measurement of weak states, the most notable aspect within the final assessment remains measuring the extent of which the government is willing to provide the basic necessities to their constituents that will ultimately determine the fragility of the state.

Variables of Destabilization

Political, social, or economic constraints vary in degree based on geographical location and are perceived differently from one culture to the next. Security is a relative concept. It depends on who is defining security, and what may be perceived as secure as opposed to what constitutes a threat. Cultural differences affect the perception of stability. From a Western perspective, stability equates with good governance and our perception of democracy—that is, civilian control over the economy, military, and government. Yet, to many throughout the world who have not been exposed to this notion of democracy, perceptions differ about how to define good governance and democracy. Noticeably common across cultures, however, is the notion of security and the ramifications of the potential of destabilization where security is fragile or nonexistent.

Look to the Periphery

While the United States has fought several insurgent groups over the past four decades, one factor remains the same: insurgencies are always local and are about control and power over a state. Additionally, insurgent groups will almost always seek assistance from either a local population or outside entity, or both. With today's changing dynamics of warfare, perhaps it will prove beneficial to begin to assess insurgents' lack of capabilities rather than continue to focus on what they are capable of, in order to assess who within the periphery of destabilization may fill that void in an effort to leverage against United States national security interests. In conducting a reverse assessment, insurgent groups' weaknesses and vulnerabilities should highlight to analysts what entities within the relevant area of operation exist which will fill that void and use this support as a strategic leverage. Conflicts travel short distances, and state security in today's era of warfare is contingent on neighboring states' security. In all cases of insurgencies, insurgents do not necessarily need to win battles; they simply need to outlast their opponents. The question remains: Who within the area of destabilization will leverage their support to sustain the insurgency and use the insurgency to a political advantage?

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Chapter 9

Reading Cultural Heritage:
What Can Heritage Tell Us about the Behavior of the Cultural "Other"?

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Culture as a System

Culture has been identified by a host of civilian and military leaders as being integral to understanding those we go to war against, those we find ourselves protecting, and those we find ourselves building relationships with to avoid conflict. Department of Defense (DoD) policy and doctrine are now being written to institutionalize aspects of culture, to include cross-cultural competence (3C), across the military and civilian education and training enterprise.

For many, culture reflects tangible and material items that are visible and common to a group of people. However, underlying this surface level of physical expression is a more pervasive level of behavior shared by a group of people. These behaviors seem to coalesce around universal themes common to all human cultures—themes such as family, governance, economy, subsistence, religion, heritage, and others. Even when themes are similar, the behavior within each of those themes or domains may differ radically across cultures. Why these behaviors exist is based on an even deeper, more foundational level of culture: a shared system of beliefs (ideas held to be true) and values. Culture is far more than expressions; it is a process of forging common meanings of things, actions, and ideas in a group of people. In its essence, culture reflects a system of integrated and interlocking domains, such as kinship, ideology, and social systems, where meaning is generated, learned, and shared across generations. To understand meaning, symbols and behavior must be connected to the often hidden grouping of beliefs and values.

A sociocultural system operates as a collection of these cultural domains that give order and expression to the meaning of behavior and beliefs. What defines a system is that its components are integrated and promote an internal synergy that sustains its members over time. Meaning discerned from beliefs about the place of family in a culture, for example, can also be connected to those in that culture who do business together and those who command respect and make decisions regarding what is just and right, while also considered an ally in times of uncertainty. In essence, knowing the extended family relationships within a local community can help explain how and why members of an extended family do business together, worship together, form alliances to preserve or build power, and other such sociocultural occurrences. Thus, the sociocultural system exists to promote and sustain meaning through shared patterns of behavior.

Understanding overall what motivates behavior in a group of people or trying to explain why groups or individuals act in certain ways is of primary concern for military operations and

strategy. Since much of what drives humans' and their cultures' behavior is both cultural and based on beliefs and values, behavior and symbols become our way of connecting action and even intent with underlying meaning and potential ramifications regarding the future of that behavior. Attempting to understand cultural behavior involves the exploration of a particular group of people through acquiring knowledge of their cultural domains (such as family, political and economic systems, religion, ways of making a living, and more), which will promote a general understanding that can help decode observed behaviors. As one builds a repository of cultural knowledge through observation, social interactions, participation, and building relationships, future behavior will unfold in patterns of meaning that are more comprehensible.

The Cultural Imperative in Twenty-first Century Stability Operations

> *When I took a decision or adapted an alternative, it was after studying every relevant—and many an irrelevant—factor. Geography, tribal structure, religion, social customs, language, appetites, standards—all were at my finger-ends. The enemy I knew almost like my own side.*
>
> Colonel T.E. Lawrence (1933)

The bipolar state-versus-state relationship that characterized the Cold War is no longer the predominant theme that applies to the international security environment. Asymmetrical engagements with mostly covert non-state groups that can be loosely connected by issue-driven networks now represent very real threats to U.S. and global security. These groups can be as diverse as rogue Somali pirates, rebel Nigerian oil workers, and Russian crime lords. However, national governments, such as Zimbabwe, Syria, and Libya, can also pose security threats that are similar to the security threats of the Cold War—nuclear and biological warfare—but with state actors who hold tenuous control over their populace. More conventional security threats from states like China, Russia, and even powerful states in the Middle East also add to unrest and uncertainty in twenty-first century global security.

Cold War doctrine and strategy depended primarily on military force to achieve U.S. security aims and objectives. The use of military force between two symmetrical nations precluded a more nuanced and deeper cultural understanding of an adversary, and thus, culture was never fully realized into military education and training. Even within these traditional threats, but especially associated with non-state actors, a diversity of beliefs, values, and behavior may differ greatly from those held by U.S. military and civilian personnel, creating both cognitive and interpersonal dissonance. From a leadership perspective, it is critical and necessary to become intimate with the cultural dynamics of the range of security threats to explain historical, contemporary, and future behavior of adversaries, allies, and partners alike. Just as important is reconciling disparate worldviews between the leader and those adversaries and allies to allow a critical and objective perspective of foreign cultural behavior. This paper will focus primarily on promoting awareness and comprehension of foreign cultures and behavior to provide meaning. However, reconciling and minimizing cross-cultural and interpersonal dissonance is also critical; there is a bounty of research on cross-cultural

competence (3C) that address this issue (see Rasmussen, Sieck, Grome, & Simpkins, 2009; Rasmussen & Sieck, 2012; Sands, 2012; Sands & Greene-Sands, 2012).

Recent and ongoing efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that conventional warfare does not fit the human-centric and very complex social and cultural environments in which U.S. military and civilian personnel find themselves. Insurgency and terrorism are now primary threats, and military doctrine, strategy and operations include human-centric Irregular Warfare (IW), Counterinsurgency (COIN), and Counter-terrorism (CT). Characteristics of these new operations include shifting perceptions of ally and adversary groups, as well as those groups who fall in between these identities based on shifting dynamics prompted by the shifting context of insurgency. Historically reconstructing the trajectory of relationships that have led to the contemporary alignment of ethnic and social relationships within a region can best be facilitated by understanding their heritage. Knowing as much about friends and allies as adversaries can help strengthen alliances and sustain enduring relationships.

The application of sociocultural knowledge is critical in the spectrum of new missions undertaken by DoD. Recent articles and studies indicate the need to begin folding sociocultural knowledge never considered necessary to the success of military strategy and operation into learning programs. The DoD/Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) has established a regional and cultural affairs program office, and the Services have constructed learning programs that emphasize the culture general and culture-specific knowledge and the need for cross-cultural competence (of which sociocultural knowledge is a key component) in promoting effective cross-cultural relations and engendering successful "navigation" through socially complex environments.

However, beyond facilitating enduring cross-cultural relationships, this body of sociocultural knowledge can promote a critical perspective in forming a more intimate familiarity with foreign cultural members and their behavior. In itself, this body of knowledge may never directly translate into predicting future behavior; however, this knowledge can provide a general understanding of how and why particular patterns of behavior are expressed and maintained. This kind of information allows a more discerning view of the motivation that undergirds behavior. This ultimately gives prediction a greater accuracy and utility. The remainder of this paper will focus on the concept of cultural heritage as a cultural domain of sociocultural knowledge that can be useful in the quest for awareness and greater familiarity of cultures, their members, and meanings of patterns of behavior visible through symbols of heritage.[17]

Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage, like a signpost, can reveal a great deal about the behavior of a group. Humans have recognized the importance of heritage for thousands of years. Heritage connects the dead with the living, transcends time to forge common group identity, and provides a means to celebrate or honor those who were considered significant through a population/culture's history. However, probing the relationships of heritage -- the nexus of physical and cultural

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[17] See the following works for more information on cultural heritage: King (2003), Rothfield (2009), Rush (2010, 2012), and Landress (2006), and Silverman and Ruggles (2008).

landscape, areas of land connected with a significant event, activity, or people (Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2011), and human society -- became more than an academic preoccupation when heritage became legally protected at home and abroad. Heritage recently became important to military strategy and operations, as both acknowledgement and preservation of its symbols became a necessary consideration in conflict and a means to build and sustain relationships when promoting stability operations.

For our purposes, there are tangible (of physical or material shape) and intangible (lacking physical properties, or without shape or form) kinds of heritage. The genesis of each is commonly from the past and maintained over time and space by tradition. Heritage to many of us is reflected through old buildings, memorials and monuments, battlefields, and sacred places and spaces, including historic neighborhoods, even more modern urban, industrial, and architectural significant structures; more or less, things that are visible to us and we experience by visiting. However, cultural heritage can also include natural environments such as fauna and flora, landscapes, beaches, and coral gardens that are considered important enough to be preserved for future generations. In many instances, the significance of heritage to military operations and to discerning meaning of cultural members' behavior involves conceptualizing the notions of natural and cultural landscapes. Cultural landscapes represent "combined works of nature and man," and are characteristic of the development of the settlement of human society over time, reflect the impact pressures or opportunities of the natural/environmental, and are shaped by social and cultural forces (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2012a, p. 1). There are three types of cultural landscapes (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2012b, p. 1):

1. Those that are clearly identified as being created by humans (such as gardens, parkways constructed for aesthetic or recreational purposes that are often associated with religious or other monumental infrastructure).

2. Evolved landscapes that were created from social or cultural imperatives and whose form and structure is in association or response to the natural environment.

3. The associative landscape that is shaped by compelling cultural associations (possibly religious or artistic) with the natural environment rather than the appearance of human-constructed material evidence, which may have little bearing on the significance of the association.

For examples of an associative landscape, the southern and central California Chumash peoples believed that Point Conception on the central California coast was the gate through which the souls of the deceased entered to begin their celestial journey to paradise, while the Shasta and Modoc peoples posited that Mt. Shasta in northern California was the center of creation (King, 2003). Human activity was restricted in these areas and this belief integrated the point and the mountain into most of the tribal ritual activities. In each of these instances, the significance of the site was associated with powerful spiritual beliefs manifested by the striking elements of the natural or physical environment. Point Conception is the most western jut of land in the continental U.S., consisting of cliff faces and churning ocean, oftentimes shrouded in fog, while Mt Shasta towers over the northern California landscape and creates dramatic displays of weather and cloud cover visible for miles. However, if the cultural landscape and beliefs supporting the significance have been passed on for hundreds or even thousands of years,

translation of that significance and location may be contested among different cultural groups (Haley & Wilcoxon, 1997).

The living dimensions of the human condition, such as the dramatic arts, languages, and traditional music, as well as the creation myths and narratives of spiritual and philosophical systems of all cultures that articulate with the natural landscape, are elements of intangible heritage (Ruggles & Siverman, 2010; Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Although without physical shape and a visible association, intangible heritage offers a means to maintain minority ethnic, social, and cultural identity and promote sustainable development in the face of external forces, such as globalization and other international forces, through the cultural knowledge and skills that transmit that knowledge across generations (UNESCO, 2012a).

In essence, cultural heritage casts a unique lens on understanding human behavior from two perspectives; it provides a catalogue of symbols placed on the physical landscape or material items retained through preservation that can help tell a story of past societies. However, more importantly, to address the need to derive meaning from contemporary behavior, from the consideration of these past symbols and items, heritage can also provide a map to understanding what transcendent and core beliefs were retained, and why. The fact that these symbols and items and intangible human movement and ritual performances have survived the generations indicates powerful, compelling and enduring themes, which can then offer much to say about how these themes will translate into motivating forces of present and future behavior.

A Victim of Conflict

> *Shortly we will be fighting our way across the Continent of Europe in battles designed to preserve our civilization. Inevitably, in the path of our advance will be found historical monuments and cultural centers that symbolize to the world all that we are fighting to preserve. It is the responsibility of every commander to protect and respect these symbols whenever possible.*
>
> General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1944)

Today, global forces of change exert asymmetrical and dramatic influence on the traditional cultural fabric of many of the ethnic and tribal groups caught in the crosshairs of change, or in the contested physical and cultural landscape of governments or movements (Silverman & Ruggles, 2008). The value and significance of heritage symbols to the cultural identity make them the target of attacks in conflict and occupation through deliberate destruction of physical symbols. Examples of this willful destruction are embedded in the oft-repeated phrase, "To the victor go the spoils of war." After the 1917 Revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks methodically destroyed Russian Orthodox Churches, mosques, and temples, as well as forbid the practice of religious beliefs. Aerial bombardments during WWII were a major cause of the destruction of important tangible heritage in Europe.

Often, extensive looting and forced transfers of cultural heritage accompany conflict and bring economic gain for the attacking forces. At the end of WWII, the Allied Military occupation government of Germany established the Offenbach Archival Depot, which was tasked with

recovering, identifying, and restoring stolen cultural property to its country of origin. The Depot closed in 1949, and by that time had handled more than 3.2 million items in over thirty-five languages (Fisher, ca. 2012). In many instances, these physical or tangible sacred and traditional symbols (and meaning) of heritage resonate as beacons to energize resistance to these external forces, i.e. conflict, insurgency, or terrorism in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. In 2001, despite international outcry, the World Heritage site of Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan was destroyed by the Taliban government with cannons and explosives, leaving a gap in the ancient grottos (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2012c). Since 2003, hundreds of the Sumerian and Old Babylonian sites in southern Iraq have been victims of massive looting by ethnic Iraqi and coalition forces (Fiske, 2007; Rush, 2010). The exquisitely carved stone Armenian Djulfa Cemetery in Azerbaijan was systematically destroyed in a few weeks in 2006 by Azeri Army units (Maghakyan, 2011).

International Preservation Efforts

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict is the paramount international treaty for the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts. The 1954 convention has to date been ratified by 95 states (including the U.S.), but its basic principles concerning respect for cultural property have become part of customary international law (UNESCO, 2012b).

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established at a 1972 convention a World Heritage List, which was a merging of two separate preservation interests: that of cultural heritage sites and the movement of conserving natural resources (UNESCO, 2012c). Numerous countries ratified this convention and list, and the U.S. was an initial sponsor of combining the conservation of cultural sites with those of nature. The idea of a "World Heritage Trust" came out of the 1965 White House Conference that would stimulate international cooperation to protect "the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry"(UNESCO, 2012d, para.1). Benefits of being a ratifier of the convention and the existence of a World Heritage List and Trust are several for developed and developing countries:

1. Countries benefit from the prestige and international cooperation of belonging to a consortium of heritage-minded states.

2. Access to the Trust, especially developing countries, seeded by U.S. of $4 million annually for identifying, preserving, and promoting World Heritage sites (this includes emergency assistance in funds and international assistance from convention signees due to human-made and natural disasters).

3. Access to the elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive management plan that sets out adequate preservation measures and monitoring mechanisms through international experts and training to the local management efforts.

4. The identification of a cultural or natural site as on the World Heritage List informs national and international awareness to the site's value, thereby increasing tourism to the site. When the site is well-managed and organized around sustainable tourism principles, the economic benefit can be significant to the local community (UNESCO, 2012e).

Heritage as a Cultural Signpost to Behavior and Motivation

Heritage Influences Identity

Consider tangible and intangible heritage as signposts to the cultural landscape and as a behavioral map, complete with guides to motivation and intent. Identity formation and sustainment is critical to indigenous peoples, ethnicities, and tribal and cultural groups who are caught in the middle of insurgencies or who are marginalized by majority governments; these groups can use heritage preservation as means to strengthen solidarity and identity and preserve land and natural resources. Cultural heritage promotes unique but universal behaviors that apply to all cultures, such as the enduring preservation of heritage and the creation or sustainment of culturally significant rituals and rites that promote the importance of heritage through time. Heritage is also a key instrument in the formation of a strong and binding sense of national, ethnic, or cultural identity. This identity serves, in turn, to ground all the other claims, interests, and other rights asserted by groups of people: rights to land, to political self-determination, to proper participation in wider polities, and to an appropriate degree of recognition and respect. Heritage is a shared resource for communication that reinforces a common identity. Its tangible and intangible aspects are among the most fundamental sources of social solidarity, worldviews, beliefs, practices, and aspirations. The display of physical manifestations of heritage (constructed infrastructure) and performance can be a strategy for asserting minority identity and resistance to change while promoting resilience of traditional ways of life and customs in the face of majority pressure. Something as cosmetic as the absence of male beards and traditional kite flying galvanized Afghans in the face of the repressive ruling Taliban, and barber shops and a sky full of dueling kites became symbols of their defeat (Kottak, 2011).

"Reading" Significance of Tangible Heritage

Understanding overall what motivates behavior in a group of people or trying to explain why groups or individuals act in certain ways is of primary concern for military operations and strategy. As expressed earlier, since much of what drives what we do is both cultural and based on beliefs and values, behavior and symbols become our way of connecting action, and even intent, with underlying meaning and potential ramifications in the future of that behavior. For instance, tangible heritage elements in the physical landscapes are often hard to study by conventional academic means. In many areas, formal resources for landscape interpretation are lacking or out of date, and where there are written materials available, the focus tends to be on the curious, dramatic, or famous features of a landscape. Therefore, in order to gain relevant information from the cultural landscape, one must go out and actively "read" and interpret it.

Tangible and intangible heritage can offer that same general framework in which to further understand group and individual behavior. Simply knowing the significance of a sacred

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or traditional place to a group of people, its location, and its relationship to past events can provide key pieces of knowledge useful to explain a variety of behaviors, including:

1. Its connections to their religion.

2. The strength of the connection between that particular location and the group's identity.

3. The actual behavior exhibited in and around that site, who can visit and who cannot.

4. The importance of maintaining/protecting/hiding that site from outsiders.

5. The connection of this particular site (as a landmark) with other that are similar across the landscape.

6. Which particular tribe, ethnicity, or group of people finds this site important.

7. What the location of this particular site can tell you about group territory and cultural boundaries.

8. Which buildings, structures, or places are considered significant versus those that are not can provide a picture of use patterns of the landscape.

9. The architectural styles of religious buildings, residences, and outbuildings, as well as crop types and field patterns, all may indicate "the economic, ethnic or religious composition of a village, area, or section of a city" (Jasparro & Jasparro, 2011, p. 4).

Religious or other heritage infrastructure, such as monuments, and the style of their construction may offer clues to economic, ethnic, and religious identities, as mentioned above. Churches or places of worship often reflect the heritage of those who make up the community in which they reside. For example, "In the United States, Catholic churches tend to be located in areas populated by southern European, Irish and Hispanic immigrants—and their descendants" (Jasparro & Jasparro, 2011, p. 14). See pictured below two Catholic churches located in the same Northeastern United States town (photographs from Jasparro & Jasparro, 2011). The cross on each church indicates the church's denomination is Catholic, but the church can also provide information to the observer or passerby about the ethnic makeup of and cultural heritage of people who reside, work, and worship in this area. The church on the left was built by an Italian community in 1917, while the church on the right is Irish and dates originally from 1855 (although it was rebuilt in 1911). Their distinct architectural styles (specifically with regards to the towers) can be traced back to the cultural origins of the communities who sponsored, constructed, and participated in worship and other church activities and events (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. **Two Catholic churches built by communities of different ethnic background (Jasparro & Jasparro, 2011).**

Similarly, mosque style and construction can provide clues to the specific Islamic civilization that had the most influence on the culture where a mosque is located. The use of colors, pitch and shape of roofs, designs of walls, size and locations of domes, and extent of property all are characteristics where variance in each is representative of culture and temporal periods.[18]

Cultural heritage landscapes must also be "read" within their wider geographical, cultural, environmental, and temporal contexts. Single landscape elements often yield limited or even irrelevant information. Interpretation of relationships and patterns of elements in the landscape can, however, provide extremely valuable information. Another example of meaning that is contextualized not only from physical symbols but from the temporal and spatial association of the symbols is reflected in the standing foundations and other infrastructure from archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan. This valley is a good example of how heritage symbols can be read to infer, interpret, and provide perspective on the influence of the past confluence of Buddhism and Islam over time in this area. The remains characterize the development of artistic styles and religious movements that occurred over a millennium, starting in the first century BCE. The valley floor contains "numerous Buddhist monastic ensembles and sanctuaries, as well as fortified edifices from the Islamic period. . . . The site is also testimony to the tragic destruction by the Taliban of the two standing Buddha statues, which shook the world in March 2001" (UNESCO, 2012c, para.1).

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[18] Distinctions in these characteristics can be seen comparing Arab, Persian/Iranian and Ottoman/Turkish mosques. See Great mosque at Qairawan in Tunisia, (http://www.panoramio.com/photo/5739088), Friday Mosque in Isfahan, Iran (http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-photo/jcrane/1/1263730781/isfahan-s-friday-mosque.jpg/tpod.html), and Mirimah mosque in Istanbul, Turkey (http://www.archisage.net/photo/the-mihrimah-sultan-mosque?xg_source=activity).

The Bamiyan Valley remains signify the power of religious synchronism – the cultural marriage of two distinct religions into a hybrid – to forge unique cultural identities that transcend generations, in this case Islam and Buddhism. The destruction of two key statues by the Taliban was an attempt to remove standing and visible symbols and obliterate that unique heritage. From a leadership perspective, the cultural landscape of the Bamiyan Valley can provide keys to understanding the formative religious identity of that region while the Taliban attack on the Valley can be contextualized as an effort to promote a more fundamental Islamic adherence, also a critical piece of intelligence (Tully, 2006).

Heritage artifacts can inform about behavior. For instance, landscapes are embedded within a temporal context and can change depending on the time of day, day of the week, season, or festival. For example, a space that is the camel market on Fridays may give the impression of being abandoned every other day of the week.

Sacred or secular texts, art, and literature are appealed to as reflecting or connecting contemporary society to past traditions and customs. Ownership of artifacts can ascribe identity to an ethnic group or tribe, or cultural movement. This connection back to the artifacts is significant in that the meaning that resides in these artifacts sustains group identity and can regulate behavior. Heritage can also be captured in art, whether old and traditional or of contemporary heritage. Graffiti and urban art can certainly reflect a new perspective on cultural heritage, or a changing emphasis on competing heritages within a society.

Significance of Intangible Heritage

Intangible heritage can be just as informative in providing critical pieces of cultural information and meaning. Intangible heritage can be "stored" in human movement patterns. Intangible heritage such as ritual, celebration, ceremony and the customs, dress, and other behaviors connected to the performance can provide clues to shared identity (Ruggles & Silverman, 2010; Sands, 2011). Flamenco dancing, like bullfighting, and buzkashi, the ethnic Afghan sport of polo, are associated elements of traditional culture that still carry compelling messages of heritage. Each has a long and storied past that reflects the overall development of the culture and/or country through time. The performances are living examples of the historical influences that shaped cultural behavior; the Flamenco is a telling example of the many different cultures and civilizations, from the Greeks and the Romans to latter Indians, Moors, and the Jews, that left their mark on what is now Spanish heritage (UNESCO Archives, 2012).

Indigenous or traditional sports such as Spanish bullfighting, Afghan buzkashi, and Brazilian capoeira, in their performance, longevity, and popularity, offer valuable insight into the meaning of behavior through customs and traditions and a living account of historical influences on the past culture. For instance, buzkashi is a traditional and rather violent form of polo that has made resurgence into the Afghan consciousness as a national sport. In its expression and ritual, buzkashi reflects the behaviors and soul of tribes and ethnic groups that populated the harsh and mountainous terrain that is now Afghanistan (Azoy, 2002). Horsemanship, alliances, solidarity, courage, and honor continue to be an integral part of the sport. Brazilian capoeira, a registered intangible heritage resource, is part sport, part dance, and all martial art performance and is a

fusion of African and indigenous Brazilian slave cultures (Downey, 2011). Its movement patterns and participation have become a symbol over time of racial oppression, ethnic amalgamation, and of a contemporary Brazilian cultural identity. Capoeira has also been "exported" around the world, and with it Brazilian behaviors and meaning.

Intangible cultural heritage, however, is primarily seen as retained through oral means, via story and narrative. Examples of the power of intangible heritage through story and narrative can be seen in Naqqali, the Iranian dramatic art of storytelling ("Two Iranian Elements," 2011, para.1). In traditional Persian society, Naqqali played a critical role in maintaining Iranian heritage in all facets of society from government to rural village life. The storyteller relates narrative through both words and movements and often accompanied by music. The performer, or naqqal, is consistent with other traditional performers in many traditional cultures, such as gypsies and troubadours. The success of the performance turns on the talent of the naqqal to entertain while promoting the messages and meaning of the story. Naqqali has declined in its importance to modern Iranian society; however, a loss of traditional rituals also can provide understanding of the pressures of modernity on Iranian heritage.

Folkore (and myth) offer a window into the worldview of others. Folklore can be simply defined as an autobiography, a people's description of themselves, and can reveal much about their beliefs, values, and behavior. Folklore takes the form of fictional narrative: myths, folktales, legends, folksongs, proverbs, riddles, games, and dances. Folklore is a means to preserve national heritage, but it is also a means to communicate ongoing or contemporary formation of identity and to sanction appropriate behavior. The existence of folklore across cultures signifies that there are universal types and themes that represent the human condition, but commonality in language, protagonist, and storyline can show association and alliance.

Much research has been done on the more "idealized" attribution of values and beliefs within folklore, but narratives also contain conflict and violence as illustrations of reinforcing traditions. Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia are good examples of how folklorists and the content of narratives can support and sustain nationalism (Magdalenic, 2008). Folklorists who were Nazi sympathizers promoted ideals of nationhood, race, and purity of bloodline to help sustain Hitler's policies. Stalin's socialist agenda was supported by folklorists and performers who cast their narratives showing prosperity and fulfillment for those working together and identifying heroic figures who gave up their lives in the Revolution and Civil War to advance social goals.

In a more modern context, and related to terrorism, social and at times violent conflict along the U.S./Mexican border produces an asymmetrical heavy emphasis in Mexican folklore and a relative absence of such intercultural conflict in the generation of American narrative, or even the total absence of Mexicans in narrative. Folklore brings out the recurrent social anxieties and social problems of a society, and for Mexicans along the border, their total domination by the U.S. through institutional means pushes their plight into folklore narratives. In this venue, Mexican representations of Americans and themselves, chicano nationalism, and even the presence of drug cartels is featured through fictional narratives, stories, and parables (Dorson, 1986).

The drug cartels and narco-terrorism feature family drug cartels, human traffickers, street-level thug gangs, and nationalist groups. These groups have loosely produced a "narcoculture" that embraces a lifestyle of violence, death, and indulgence. To further the effect of this culture, narrative has been produced by cultural groups that emphasize the lawlessness of this lifestyle, and these groups adapt icons that have historical roots to provide a psychological edge over Mexican society.

The traditional icon, Santa Muerte (Saint Death), and traditional folklore featuring Saint Death has been co-opted by narco-terrorists to perpetuate the goals of the drug cartels and seed fear in those who oppose their aims, helping foster a sense of powerlessness to others (Kail, 2010). Symbols grounded in tradition and narrative play a part in the creation and behavior of terrorist activities. Symbols and its presence in folklore circulated by narco-terrorists can be used to identify groups or even be a point of personal motivation. Santa Muerte as a symbol used by narco-terrorists appears to affect the behavior of those who combine her image with criminal activities (Kail, 2010). Santa Muerte is embraced as a literal "angel of death" that can comfort those on the fringes of society that might otherwise lack spiritual "courage" to commit acts of crime or violence.

For intelligence concerns, and as well leadership concerns, each piece of intangible heritage information that is brought into play when considering past, present, or future events provides more nuance and explanatory power to help the analyst, collector, and collection manager subsequently understand behavior.

Correcting for "Reader" Bias

Cultural heritage is a reflection of a people's enduring and compelling beliefs. Those beliefs and behaviors that have been "immortalized" in tangible and intangible heritage have been contextualized in the unique historical trajectory of that culture. Reading that historical trajectory through symbol and behavior will oftentimes confront the reader's own system of beliefs and worldview, creating dissonance and prompting conscious or unconscious cognitive and affective bias. This bias can be expressed in an ethnocentric reaction to the symbols of heritage or the behavior represented through those symbols, confronting the dissonance and mitigating both the cognitive and affective effects impacting the ability to "see" the symbols and behavior as relevant to the cultural framework that supports the symbols and behavior. In other words, biases (as well as stereotyping, racism, and prejudice) can limit or influence the ability to objectively, and empirically, derive the meaning from those who sustain heritage and its behavior, as well as effectively use that understanding to probe present and future behavior.

What signifies heritage and the culturally specific meaning of that heritage to a people is not universal. Indeed, celebration of a culture's past may not be always the end result of promoting one's heritage. Civil war battlefields, civil rights museums, events, and locations, and museums devoted to the Holocaust all chronicle the past behavior of groups of people or whole cultures that ran or run counter to the sense of universal human rights that many countries have signified through the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, ratified in 1948 (United Nations, 2012). However, in many countries and cultures where the U.S. military deploys in stability operations, in the eras of past colonialism and the current post-colonial era, heritage

includes periods and acts of atrocities, genocide, and terrorism. These occurrences can impact one's objective assessment of the meaning and significance of the heritage symbols and behavior that revolve around those symbols with an eye toward understanding present and future behavior. Rwanda's turbulent past, specifically the 1994 genocide of what many say was 800,000 Tutsis by the governing and majority Hutus, is on display throughout the countryside in visible and often graphic memorials. Mere plaques or monuments or standing structures where this genocide occurred are not solely symbols of this past; landscapes and buildings or sites where hundreds or even thousands of Tutsis were murdered feature mass burial sites or sites where remains of those murdered are still observable on the surface or in buildings.

One example is the Ntarama Church, one hour south of Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. Over 5,000 Tutsi and Tutsi sympathizers were murdered, many of them children and women, in an environment that was considered a safe haven by those murdered. Now a memorial site, thousands of human limb bones and skulls, clothing, and other material items remain in situ (Kigali Memorial Centre, ca. 2012). Ntarama serves as a visceral and emotional testimony to Rwandan's recent past. But it is also, to those U.S. military personnel who support our engagement with Rwandan military in Rwanda, a very stark and perhaps, to many, an image of Rwandan heritage difficult to reconcile, let alone stand as a signpost to understanding Rwandan society. Why Rwanda as a society continues to collectively remember that period in their recent past through the heritage symbols and behaviors toward those symbols can provide a compelling window for understanding meaningful behavior and perhaps motivations of segments of Rwandan society in the present and future. Being able to work through the possible cognitive and affective dissonance in response to what the memorials actually consist of and signify is critical to being able see how the Rwandans understand their past, and how this past might indeed influence the future actions of Rwandan society, including civil and military organizations.

Engaging a methodological cultural relativism, the ability to suspend judgment of others' behavior until the meaning of that behavior is understood within the others' cultural framework (Sands, 2012; Sands & Greene-Sands, 2012) will help mitigate dissonance and biases that emerge when confronted with heritage symbols and behaviors that are contrary to U.S. cultural beliefs and worldview. Relativism includes the development of alternative perspective-taking, developing cultural self-awareness, observational skills, and applying cultural knowledge, and these competencies make up a baseline that promotes the development of 3C. The DoD, through policy, research, and learning programs, has initiated 3C development in military and civilian populations (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, DEOMI, 2012).

Conclusion

Cultural heritage can yield remarkable insight into the behavior of a group of people through the expression of its tangible and intangible symbols and present a means to build and sustain partnerships and alliances with cultures and nations in areas included in stability operations (Rush, 2012). Cultural heritage has always been a victim of conflict, and it is not surprising that recent international conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have and continue to claim tangible heritage. The importance of cultural heritage has led to international conventions and treaties and identification of those heritage symbols most compelling to a people and a nation. Because of the importance of heritage to a culture, respect for and protection of heritage becomes

a means to develop and sustain partnerships in stability operations and an avenue to develop a sustainable and economic appreciation for heritage by those cultural outsiders and the international community.

A universal component of a sociocultural system, heritage acts to coalesce cultural identity over time; it promotes a sense of continuity of core beliefs and acts to solidify a sense of origins for cultural members. Monuments mark an important event or extol a hero's contribution; rituals and performance celebrate the soul of a culture; memorials, as shown, can celebrate or remind of past battles or dark moments of internal strife; landscapes can reveal origins or provide a portal to the heavens. All are visible symbols of a culture's belief system and guides to understanding past, present, and future behavior. In this paper, heritage was offered as a means to uncover and make sense of a culture's core beliefs manifested through its tangible and intangible heritage. Reading a cultural landscape through its associations and its natural and physical properties, understanding the connections of place and materials to tradition, and observing cultural performance can provide a compendium of cultural knowledge that connects the past to the present and a potential guide to future behavior.

Heritage, being a symbol of a culture and its beliefs, can present cultural behavior contrary to behavior valued to those outside of that culture. Engaging intra- and interpersonal skills can help mitigate the cognitive and affective dissonance experienced and minimize and filter biases that might affect one's ability to derive meaning from heritage symbols and behavior.

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Chapter 10

Culture of the Social Contract, Understood as Property

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We can use *property* concepts to describe public contracts about contracts. They may or may not be formalized, but are in any case expressions of preferential ownership rights among individuals and collectives, especially as they pertain to land and land use. Few aspects of a culture are more important than how power is shared, power sharing and property distribution being all but synonymous.[19] A description of a property system supposes explanation of who is allowed to be where, to use what, or to gain materially or spiritually at specific places and times. There is no limit to the number and scope of examples of conflicts related to overlapping claims to preferential rights in places. For an example that is at the same time old, current, seemingly intractable, with religious overtones, greatly about rents, and at the center of what may be the most conflict-generative piece of ground in the world, consider a BBC report on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. "A recent survey says that part of the complex, a rooftop monastery, is in urgent need of repair, but work is being held up by a long-running dispute between two Christian sects who claim ownership of the site" (Davies, 2012). Property analysis reveals the details of significant human relationships, as well as the particularization of power in time and space. In the course of discussing culture, the various authors of this anthology have assumed, alluded to, or discussed directly some relevant aspect of property systems. This article proffers property investigation and analysis as a starting point for recognizing and comparing societies' cultural attributes as they relate to power, conflict, and conflict resolution.[20]

Before proselytizing to property as the central analytical prompt in the study of culture (and vice versa), we might ask to what end. Why study any aspect of culture, and what part do we prioritize in light of some greater objective, especially a military one? From *Winning Insurgent War* (Demarest, 2011) comes the following list of military reasons for studying culture:

1. To find people and things. Cultural knowledge helps locate individuals, their wealth, and their supporters. ("Locate" means establish their precise

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[19] I sidestep defining the word *culture*, finding most definitions acceptable and no one definition imperative. Since the present book is an effort to explore *sociocultural systems,* a concept the definition of which was itself left open, I offer my own definition as follows: a sociocultural system distributes rights and duties, including to scarce resources; causes cohesive and divisive identities and standards of beauty and worth; influences the interrelationship between humans and their surrounding environment; and delimits approaches to meaning and spirituality. In the context of this definition, the role of *property* as presented herein is mostly, but not exclusively, concerned with relationships within sociocultural systems that most directly connect to the distribution of rights and duties.

[20] The observations and opinions herein are not those of the U.S. Government, the U.S. Army, or any agency of the U.S. government. They are those of the author alone, Geoffrey Demarest.

whereabouts—where they will sleep tonight, where their mother is buried, the number of their bank account, where their motorcycle is sitting, their email address, where and when they play golf . . . and where they feel safe.). For the competitor in a violent struggle, this is the first and most important reason for cultural knowledge. It is what Sam Spade, the private investigator, knows. The rest is important too, but if he knows where you are, but you don't know where he is, you are prey.

2. To communicate good. Cultural knowledge can improve communications with others so as to endear and not offend, to facilitate collaboration and compromise, and to settle disputes peacefully when preferable. This involves language beyond the verbal, and into customs, prejudices, habits, mores, expectations, fears, historical grievances, community pride and the like. All knowledge is grist to the mill. Especially important is to identify any aspects of the culture related to honor and dishonor.

3. To identify objects of desire, sources and holders of power, grievances, agents, resolution mechanisms, debts, tax relationships, jurisdictions and expectations. In short, to comprehend the territorial geography of conflict and conflict resolution.

4. To set reasonable objectives. Knowing how or if to change the social contract, how long such change might reasonably take to implement, and how long they might last. This may include determining the interrelationships between people's behaviors and their environments in order to derive sustainable improvements in human flourishing and harmony. When good intentions are not built on sufficient knowledge, the reward may be a set of nasty unintended consequences.

5. To put things in the right place. Whether you want to find the optimal location for optimally place a fish pond, a police station, a camera, or a shooter, it is local cultural knowledge (and usually the kind that cannot be gained via remote sensing) that will guide best.

6. To get the joke. Jokes work the same mental pathways as military deceptions. For practical purposes military deceptions *are* jokes.[21] Irregular armed conflicts are generally clothed in law, economics, propaganda and other aspects of quotidian, civilian life. Not being able to get civilian jokes means being vulnerable to the dangerous military or criminal ones. (pp.129-130)

If the above list is a reasonable one—that is, if it represents the principle or best practical reasons for investigating culture—what then is the benefit of putting property at the heart of that investigation? Property can be defined as follows:

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[21] On the relationship between jokes and military deception, I recommend R. V. Jones, "The Theory of Practical Joking—Its Relevance to Physics," online at *Deceptology*, http://www.deceptology.com/2010/03/theory-of-practical-joking-its.html

Property is a contract among society and owners that recognizes preferential rights and correlated duties. The strength of the social contract{ XE "*social contract*" } can be judged by the quality of its observance, which depends on the quality of the evidence of ownership and on the capacity of both owners and the society (usually by way of some government) to act on conclusions logically drawn from the evidence. (Demarest, 1998, p. 9)

Knowledge of property relationships can speed fulfillment of each of the elements of the why-study-culture list. Realization of the first goal—to find people and things—is greatly accelerated by seeking property knowledge. Private investigators, police detectives, and forensic scientists are especially attracted to property records in order to locate people and things. They almost always do so in combination with other elements of cultural knowledge. These individuals often possess an intuitively broad understanding of the concept of property. For them, property is a set of preferential rights that tie persons to places in time. A ballet ticket (especially if it were purchased online with a credit card) becomes a formal property record, and a powerful one at that. It states that a certain person has obtained a right to fill a specific space at a very specific time. To know that a person might buy such a ticket requires some additional cultural background knowledge, however. A given society might not offer online purchasing for seats at the Bolshoi, but might distribute preferences to, say, serving as a float bearer during an Easter Week religious procession, or competing to toss steer by the tail in a local rodeo. Preferential rights tend to be exercised, and they tend to outline important events, attitudes, beliefs, tastes, and relationships. Among those relationships, few are more important than the sharing of rights to be in a place, exclude others from it, receive rents, or to further distribute any of these. Marriage is the most obvious and ubiquitous relationship in this regard, but there exist many variations of the distribution of rights related to places. Still, the variation is not so great that it escapes useful categorization or defies cross-cultural understanding.

It seems that almost every investigation of foreign cultures arrives eventually at the conclusion that the rights and duties tying people to each other and to land are of critical importance for understanding power. Curiously, our approach to foreign areas, at least in military matters, rarely begins with a careful description and inventory of property.[22] If we could signal one single epistemological error in U.S. military deployments, it would probably be late arrival to the importance of property relationships. In Afghanistan, it appears that the ISAF commanders only turned seriously to the question of property ownership after the study done by Batson (2008) regarding the possibility and importance of creating cadastral records there. Many veterans of that conflict express frustration over the ignorance accepted by their commands as to who had what right to sell what land, who collected rent from whom, where the landlords lived, and so on.[23]

The result of not placing property knowledge at the forefront of human geographic study

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[22] Much of this failure relates back to the history of academe and of political philosophies that have disdained the rational and balanced study of property, relegating the word itself largely to law schools. Even today, the mainstream "poststructuralist" approach to property is insubstantial. See, for instance, Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (2002): "Under capitalism, the state sets up institutions to defend property. The most obvious of these is the law, backed up by police and prisons" (pp. 32-33).

[23] Personal interviews by the author with several veterans returned from Iraq and Afghanistan.

is not limited to lack of diligence in finding people, wealth, and power relationships. More evident perhaps is the complementary failure to put things in the right places. Knowing where to place a school, a road, fish pond, or power plant—in short, anything useful in terms of land-use planning and project development—is severely compromised when not founded on a formalized understanding of who has what rights in real estate. It is bad enough when some outsider builds a school building without an integral comprehension of what comprises a school. A school is not a building, but rather a set of relationships and duties among people regarding who will do what in a particular place and time. When the project begins with specific knowledge of relevant rights and duties, selection of the best location to erect the school's building becomes a more sustainable notion.

There is also a "so what," a special relevance, to the study of property systems as it pertains to conflict resolution, whether that resolution comes by way of armed struggle or not. Places with informal property are probably doomed to violence. As Powelson (1988) observed, no formal property, no peace.[24] Accepting this assertion makes the study and improvement of real property systems imperative, at least in the long run. Power, property, and wealth can be, in most circumstances and in most places, equated to each other, tied to each other, or even considered the same thing exactly. Therefore, as a virtue of nation-building, foreign internal defense, stabilization, or democratization, the formalization of property deserves mental, emotional and practical weight equal to that of human rights{ XE "human rights" } prosecutions, fair elections, or satellite images.

This is not to say that the absence of formal real property records is the basis of violence in a society, or that the creation of formal systems will lead to peace. Property is wrapped up in a hundred other cultural facets, but formalization of property, especially real property, is one of the most important of humankind's inventions for conflict resolution.[25]

> A place may still suffer violent dissention even if it counts on formal records, functioning property courts, and a free and fluid market in land. Nevertheless, a society that does not formalize ownership rights and duties, especially rights and duties related to land, will not enjoy peace. Comprehensive, precise, transparent{ XE "transparent" } expression of real property is a necessary precondition of peace; places outside the lines of formal property necessarily slump toward possession by force. From this assertion follows another that bears on the way human security is pursued . . . in lands where property has not been formalized, most other developmental efforts will be a waste of time and money, since they will ultimately succumb to violence and tyranny. (Demarest, 2008, p. 2)

Furthermore, sustainability of the interrelationship between humans and their physical environment appears especially vulnerable to failures and inadequacies in property systems. Bethell (1998) argues convincingly, for instance, that desertification in Moslem lands can be

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[24] Perhaps in some social contexts and on a small scale, humans live harmoniously without the necessity of a local courthouse filled with property plats and their keepers. But the author's assertion is made in a world of large polities and desperate conflicts. In this context, the assertion is absolute: there cannot be a liberal{ XE "liberal" } polity, free and peaceful, without formal property.

[25] It may be idle to postulate what might be the greatest invention for conflict resolution, but standard measurement is a good candidate. For a compelling argument on this point, see Andro Linklater's (2002) *Measuring America*.

attributed in good part to the absence of transparent ownership of private property. He notes wryly, "Goats have flourished in the Arab world precisely as a result of insecure property" (p. 241). Much of the argument in favor of property research and the formalization of property systems (as pathways to conflict resolution) rests on a belief that territorial jealousy is a central column of human nature. Ardrey's (1966) *Territorial Imperative* is perhaps the outstanding anthropology milestone in this stream of thinking, at least in terms of the popular literature.[26] While the influence of human nature, or at least the influence of human interpretations of human nature, is derided by a number of today's critical social scientists, the record of formal property systems as an ameliorator of territorial violence is compelling.

Yet another reason why property awareness is valuable within the study of culture has to do with technologies and technological change. Property analysis may be helpful for understanding the cultural role of technological changes as to the balance of power among a society's members. Technologies ("technology" taken as a concert of things, users, institutions, and habits which relate things with users) can be conveniently divided into three categories to analyze how they affect power development in a society: their influence on the value of property, the phenomenon of inventions *as* property, and the influence of innovation on our ability to protect and gain property.

For instance, if in a particular residential dwelling there is no practically available Internet service connection, the Internet is likely to cause certain members of the family to spend time and other resources trying to get to an Internet connection. The impact on family and community relationships is in addition to whatever effects the Internet might deliver from persons who arrive at the residence from places that do have Internet connection. The market, or perhaps opportunity value, of the Internet-isolated residence may be low in the eyes of some individuals, while high in the opinions of others. That value depends in part on the existence and condition of a market for the residence itself (De Soto, 2000). If the fact of the residence's off-the-gridness were revealed on the Internet, for instance, then that net-advertised presence might tap into a market demand for remote places, and the fetching price might rise. If, as is more likely, the Internet audience were limited to younger, increasingly Internet-connected youths, the attractiveness of the residence might be low in relation to other residences that had better Internet access. To the aging parents at the isolated residence, the Internet may seem cruelly destructive of the value of their house as a home, not because of the market pricing, but because the Internet may have gutted the residence's role as a place where younger members of an extended family might seek to (or be relegated to) convene socially, and therefore where the parents would have opportunities to socialize them. Some power is taken indirectly from the parents. The interrelationship of a family with its physical environment is changed. So, while a culture may be changed by what is learned via the Internet, the greater effect may be an indirect one—change in the places of human contact. This is too obvious an example perhaps, but hopefully it sheds light on how an invention can affect the real value of real property.

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[26] On the idea that to human biological nature can be ascribed much of human armed conflict, see also Malcolm Potts and Thomas Hayden (2008) *Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World*.

Considering the Internet *as* property, and proceeding from the notional residence in the above paragraph, leads us to a bigger geography, and perhaps to more conflict. The place where there is an Internet connection (server) may itself be a highly coveted location. It is a place where people of differing levels of power and differing loyalties and diametrically differing philosophies find themselves in close physical proximity. The bidding for such a place can skyrocket.

This brings us to the last of the three streams: the influence of innovation on our ability to protect and gain property. Use of the Internet has become a best practice in making the evidence of ownership rights and duties immutable. Let's look, however, at a much simpler and older technology, that of the firearm. In some societies, possession of firearms is highly, jealously restricted. In many others, perhaps in that of the nominal isolated residence above, the firearm is a ubiquitous accoutrement of manhood, without which the independence and protection of the family is thrown into doubt. In a culture in which stable evidence of property ownership is prized and respected, the Internet might play a central role in the preservation of rights. Meanwhile, people in many places are obliged to resort to lesser technologies to support even the most basic rights of exclusion to places of rest and familial peace. It would be an error to look at the carrying of firearms in many technologically less electronic societies and explain the phenomenon of personal firearms as merely a symbolic trapping of gender and maturity. Understood in the context of property, we note that porting arms often connects to the preservation of preferential rights in land, and perhaps to the assignment of those rights according to clan and family. One form of ownership, in this case portable possession of personal property, is embedded or interwoven with preferential rights in land.

To this point the discussion has been limited generally to a property approach to analyzing culture—or to property as an aspect of culture that is an especially efficient pathway to understanding a sociocultural system (and especially to understanding power within a society). To some extent this anthology is exploring issues related not just to foreign societies, but potential actions of the U.S. government, and in particular actions of the U.S. Army, that further American goals in foreign lands. Whether these actions are contained within the terms "developmental," "security assistance," "nation-building," or something else, an integrated or at least complementary subject ought to be the possibility, propriety and profitability of creating or changing the property system (within the overall sociocultural system).

That property creation and formalization can be as important as elections in aiding the cause of liberty is a point well made by Richard Pipes (2000). He writes:

> Democratic procedures in electing governments do not automatically ensure respect for the civil rights of citizens. If proof is required, one need only recall the reign of Napoleon III, who used his lawfully obtained mandate to suppress freedom of the press, to arrest and exile citizens without due process, and altogether to arrogate to himself dictatorial powers. Democracy, indeed, can be "illiberal." (p. 280)

We can recall with this master historian the reign of Napoleon III, or we can watch Venezuela's Hugo Chavez{ XE "Chavez" } doing the same now. Open electoral processes are

but one piece of a political structure able to spread power so that diffuse property rights can be created and maintained.

What is to be done? Special attention should be paid to the location, condition, and control of land title registries, the transparent functioning of water courts, the status of real estate professionals, and the respect of private property to the extent it exists. Whether or not a given society should move toward more private, more finely distributed ownership is a separate matter from the formalization of that ownership. Mexico recently undertook, without violent uproar, one of history's most extensive and comprehensive government-implemented land reforms. Called *Procede*, the program led to the privatization, by degrees, of a major portion of millions of hectares of rural agricultural lands that had been held in common or under communal ownership. For Herlihy et al. (2006), focusing directly on property, revealed details of the broader complex of social and economic challenges confronting indigenous peoples in Mexico. Conclusions regarding the efficacy of private versus common ownership of rural land are mixed. The México Indígena study opened a universe of human geographic knowledge to the researchers. It also helped local residents understand the administrative complexities of a sweeping government program, and to anticipate and analyze the impact on their lives of such revolutionary change.

Each of the authors in this anthology brings his or her own version of testimonial to the value of cultural study in the context of U.S. foreign involvement. In each case, their observations and conclusions can be usefully tied to a consideration of property rights and systems. The urging here is simple:

- Learn physical and human geography at the local level

- Seek cultural knowledge about property rights and duties

- Prepare cultures for conflict resolution by developing property systems

Property is not touchable things, but a cultural phenomenon of rights and duties associating people with things—rights and duties that are recognized and enforced by a sociocultural collective. Property is a social contract, an agreement about agreements about who has what, and about how agreements will be enforced. Property systems all include some degree of what may be recognized as private property, along with other elements more recognizable as centralized use designs. Every society has some property system in which a balance is struck between the collective recognition of disparate preferential rights and the collective recognition of concentrated or commonly held rights. Property systems, as an identifiable weave within more complex sociocultural systems, may be the part closest to conflict resolution. Property is intimately related to human territoriality and trespass. The alternative to property, in all but the simplest and smallest systems, is possession by force.

Territory is not the cause of war. It is the cause of war only in the sense that it takes two to make an argument. What territory promises is the high probability that if intrusion takes place, war will follow.

Ardrey (1966, p. 244)

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Chapter 11

Government, Governance, and Land: Positively Compounding Complex Operations

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Under the rubric of governance, U.S. national security strategy is increasingly focused on building the capacity of host nation governments to improve security, police, rule of law, and economic livelihoods for their citizens.[27] For many U.S. officials, military or civilian, governance is synonymous with government. This paper distinguishes between the two terms and examines implications for future peacebuilding amid complex human struggles over land. At this writing the last American combat troops have exited Iraq and a planned withdrawal from Afghanistan is underway. Commenting on the shift in national security strategy since military operations began in those two countries, Chester Crocker, professor of strategic studies at Georgetown University and former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, reflects on the state of peacebuilding. "Up through 2006, conflict management had been deemphasized but then we realized that we couldn't solve problems through conflict, but needed to return to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. What we are seeing at the moment is the conflict management phase of how to make the war-to-peace transition work better, how to stand up weak states and how to rebuild accountable governments after conflict" (U.S. Institute of Peace, 2011). Crocker rightly views the building of accountable governments as an essential task of conflict management. But many developing world government officials lack the political will for increased transparency and accountability. Particularly with land tenure and property rights (LTPR), the status quo often conveys social power, prestige, and profit for them and their well-placed relatives.

In post-conflict environments, even where land disputes engendered the conflict, short-term humanitarian assistance has been followed by the standard suite of interventions: security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; rule of law; and construction projects dominate attention and resources. In the Reconstruction and Stability phase of operations, repressed LTPR problems surface, sometimes violently. Many land disputes are serious enough to impede the mission and hinder reaching end state goals. U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan, frequently confronted with competing LTPR claims, wisely have not attempted to address land matters. Few outsiders understand the myriad unwritten customary rules and invisible social power structures related to Afghan lands. Add to that scores of fraudulent documents and strings of legitimate documents from now-defunct regimes, and LTPR become nightmarish vexations. With a great sigh of relief, commanders of already complex operations avoid compounding them further by quipping that land issues belong to GIRoA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan). While this is theoretically true, it offers no

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solace. Peace and stability remain elusive end state goals when the host nation government is not up to the task. Other actors loom to wield power in the vacuum. As explained in a publication by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2009):

> Fundamentally, land governance is about power and the political economy of land. Land tenure is the relationship among people with respect to land and its resources. The rules of tenure define how access is granted to rights to use, control, and transfer land….they develop in a manner that entrenches the power relations between and among individuals and social groups. (pp. 1-2)

This paper contrasts *government* with *governance*. It further asserts that when post-disaster or post-conflict governments lack presence, legitimacy, or capacity, it is a fallacy to assume that the area is *terra nullius*. The term "non-state actors" increasingly has taken on villainous overtones, but not all are nefarious. This paper borrows another term, sub-state entities, from William Reno, to describe non-adversarial non-state actors. Customary Land Secretariats are presented as a positive example of Ghanaian civil society and customary leaders exercising land governance. Peacebuilding actors must engage government and sub-state entities that exercise governance because the influence and support of both coteries are indispensable for mission success.

Government, Governance, and Land Conflict

Authority over land is raw power. When government (rule of law) fails to protect people's LTPR, sub-state entities rush in to provide these "services." In *Where There Is No Government,* Sandra Joireman's (2011) research on enforcement mechanisms in a slum area of Nairobi is emblematic. She identified three sub-state entities in Kibera, "a pocket of statelessness located directly in the geographic center of power in Kenya" (p. 151), that have emerged to fill the void left by a state that lacks the political will to resolve land disputes. First, non-government organizations (NGOs) engage in alternate dispute resolution because the government is perceived as aloof, ethnically biased, or corrupt (demanding bribes). The other two entities are not so altruistic and demand payment. In one scenario, government officials, outside their formal authority, misuse the prestige of their positions to resolve disputes for personal enrichment. More notoriously, ethnic gangs run protection rackets and use violence and intimidation on behalf of clients seeking redress. While the latter two mechanisms often achieve results faster than the NGO route, and at less cost than the convoluted government judiciary, their ill-gotten gains ultimately weaken the state and invite larger-scale conflict (Joireman, 2011).

Mary Kaldor (2011), Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics, names weak and failing states as a primary driver of human conflict. She also echoes Crocker's assessment of how external peacebuilders can best intervene in post-conflict situations:

The aim of any intervention is to stabilize the situation so that a space can be created for a peaceful political process rather than to win through military means alone. In the end, a legitimate political authority has to be established through debates involving the people. The most that can be achieved through the use of military force is stabilization. Again, this is a difficult cognitive shift for the military since they tend to see their roles in terms of defeating an enemy. (p. 7)

For external actors, the cause of the conflict they are to address is not always readily discernable. According to Father Clement Aapengnuo (2010), "The misdiagnosis of African conflicts as ethnic ignores the political nature of the issues of contention. People do not kill each other because of ethnic differences; they kill each other when these differences are promoted as the barrier to advancement and opportunity" (p. 14). He admonishes external actors to examine the political roots of violence on the African continent and urges a redirection of conflict prevention efforts: "At the core of ethnic conflicts is the relationship between ethnic groups and the state in the search for security, identity, and recognition" (p. 16). The Catholic cleric points to the heightening of intergroup differences as a driver of conflict, and to mechanisms that ensure people's grievances are taken seriously as conflict mitigators. The latter tangibly reduce opportunities for ethnic mobilization.

No doubt Aapengnuo applauds a recent development that enhances the effectiveness of the external actors' toolkit of corrective measures. The about-face in emphasis that Crocker noted for twenty-first century U.S. military operations has been accompanied by a major paradigm shift in understanding global LTPR. Whereas, a decade ago, land titling via the state was considered the conveyance of choice for delivering land to individuals, today a continuum of rights and interests in land has become the preferred framework. The continuum reflects an inclusive array of customary land rights of poor and marginalized populations. As a result, new ways of constructing land administration, as well as land information systems and their management, have had to be developed (Augustinus, 2010). For sub-state entities that have long exercised customary as opposed to statutory governance in land matters, this change is most auspicious. It is heartening to know that one senior leader already "gets it." U.S. Army Colonel Christopher Kolenda, Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and editor of *Leadership: The Warrior's Art*, well understands the distinction between government and governance. The former brigade commander in Afghanistan accounts for reasons behind state failure and describes how customary authorities exercise power. Remembering that engagement does not constitute endorsement, Kolenda's (2011) description should become a prescription for peacebuilders:

While government consists of rules, officials, and institutions that are supposed to govern an area, governance is about relationships, performance, and accountability. In fact, governance defines relationships between leaders and constituents; develops the rules, policies and processes for decision-making, setting expectations, and establishing enforcement mechanisms. Further, governance is the primary means of establishing oversight and maintaining accountability for performance. (Kolenda, personal interview, 2011)

For international actors to recognize that with a measure of public confidence and enforcement capacity, a legitimate political authority (power broker) need not be a state

institution is a game-changer for assessment and analysis of the human terrain. What this change means to U.S. civil-military operators is the subject of the next section.

The Operational Imperative in Onerous Human Terrain

U.S. military and national security leaders, based on lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, have crafted new doctrine that addresses the needs of civilians in conflict and post-conflict environments. Army Field Manual 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, both titles *Counterinsurgency*, stress that "civil considerations are often the most important factors" in planning military operations (Cricks, 2011, p. 32). Both publications annotate the requirement to focus on groups beyond the host nation government and the adversary. Similarly, in *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, Lieutenant General Michael Flynn lamented that the U.S. intelligence apparatus was unable to answer fundamental questions about the operational environment, i.e., government and governance structures (Flynn, Pottinger, & Batchelor, 2010). Bereft of such information civil/military operators are unlikely to craft objectives, conduct operations, and realize an end state marked by peace and stability. In Cricks' (2011) words:

> Successful stabilization efforts that enable effective civilian government following conflict demand a better understanding of the concerns and perspectives of . . . other regional organizations and NGOs, as well as pillars of social power in the affected nations, including religious groups and tribal leaders. Who could possibly be (or become) better equipped within the interagency community to provide such information than the Department of State and its affiliate USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development)? (p. 34)

The clarion call has surmounted the federal budget crisis and on October 1, 2011, the U.S. Department of State instituted the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) to serve as the government locus for policy and operational solutions for crisis, conflict, and stability. CSO's mission statement reads, "The bureau emphasizes sustainable solutions guided by local dynamics and actors, and promotes unity of effort, the strategic use of scarce resources, and burden-sharing with international partners" (U.S. Department of State, 2011). CSO is forward-thinking and seeks to:

- **Get ahead of change.** While the scale and types of future crises cannot be predicted, the complex nature and cascading effects of 21st century challenges require a more forward-looking State Department. CSO will support the State Department's ability to anticipate major security challenges by providing timely, operational solutions.

- **Drive an integrated response.** CSO will build integrated approaches to conflict prevention and stabilization by linking analysis, planning, resources, operational solutions, and active learning and training. The bureau will call on its civilian responders to deploy in a timely manner to areas of instability in order to bring the right mix of expertise to each unique situation.

- **Leverage partnerships.** CSO will work with a range of non-governmental and international partners to prevent conflict, address sources of violence, build on existing resiliencies, and promote burden-sharing. In particular, CSO will encourage

greater involvement of local civil society—including women, youth, and the media—
to prevent and respond to conflict. (U.S. Department of State, 2011)

The creation of CSO comes none too soon for generating policy and operational solutions for crisis, conflict, and stability in Africa. The continent is convulsing under pressure from two titanic drivers of conflict with land matters at their core: land grabs and peri-urban slums. Land grabs are large-scale land acquisitions in which the local community is not consulted or informed in advance, compensation is inadequate, and its members may even be physically evicted. Land grabs are not transparent business deals; often no written agreement is produced. In some cases this is due to weak state administration, but more often it is filthy lucre. When government officials encourage large, private investments in vast land tracts populated by distant, marginalized people, personal emolument comes at the expense of societal well-being and stability. According to Ståhl (2011):

> In the past few years there has been a surge in land leases. Exact figures are impossible to come by, since negotiations between investors and national governments or local authorities are typically classified. According to World Bank data, the magnitude of land sales and leases for commercial purposes was about four million hectares per annum in the middle of this decade, while it jumped to 45 million hectares in 2009 and two thirds of these affected Africa. The trend is clear: ever more land is being purchased or leased to international and national investors. When these projects reach the production stage, major socio-economic consequences can be anticipated. (pp. 3-4)

Rapid urbanization is an extraordinary twenty-first century human migration trend. In 2007, the percentage of urban dwellers on Earth surpassed 50%. The decade of 2000-2010 witnessed unparalleled urban growth. Rapid urbanization has also seen the absolute number of slum dwellers increase from 776.7 million in 2000 to some 827.6 million in 2010, and therein lies a gigantic driver of conflict (UN-HABITAT, 2008). A slum household is benignly defined by the United Nations as a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following conditions: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation facilities; sufficient living area (i.e., not more than three people sharing the same room); structural quality and durability of dwellings; and security of tenure.

> With so many millions living in slums, and countless thousands joining them every day, we are indeed sitting on a social time bomb that is ticking away quietly in many overcrowded, poverty-stricken corners of a geopolitical chessboard already fraught with problems. It is a shocking fact, for example, that 61.7 per cent of people living in towns and cities in sub-Saharan Africa today live in slums. (UN-HABITAT, 2008, p. 5)

Socioeconomic links between a planned city (Nairobi) and industrial cores and slums like Kibera are minimal at best. They coexist but rarely interact. Despite close geographic proximity, the slums are beyond the reach of government and altogether unplanned. Therefore, the burgeoning peri-urban slums surrounding the formal mega-cities of Africa and South Asia create increasingly unknowable battle-space (Thomas, 2002). In *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis (2006) offers a more barbarous characterization of slums: "A grim human world largely cut off from the subsistence solidarities of the countryside as well as disconnected from the cultural and political

life of the traditional city" (p. 200). As if to stoke the conflagration he fears, Davis calls the warehousing of the twenty-first century's surplus humanity in slums the radical new face of inequality. He asks, "If informal urbanism becomes a dead-end street, won't the poor revolt? Aren't the great slums—as Disraeli worried in 1871 or Kennedy fretted in 1961—just volcanoes waiting to erupt?" (p. 202).

Destitute people are surprisingly resilient. Just ask anyone who has served a tour in Afghanistan or Haiti. The overcrowding of millions into slums does shape an edgy, but not necessarily apocalyptic, human terrain. According to Davis, "Slum populations can support a bewildering variety of responses to structural neglect and deprivation, ranging from charismatic churches and prophetic cults to ethnic militias, street gangs, neoliberal NGOs, and revolutionary social movements" (p. 202). Into this virulent human landscape the fledgling CSO desires to generate solutions for global crisis, conflict, and impediments to stability—a tall order indeed.

> Some overarching difficulties stand out in post-conflict reconstruction experiences. Namely, many reconstruction efforts have been insufficiently informed by what institutions already exist and so have tended to reinvent the wheel (or worse, invent an extra wheel) based on the assumption of *terra nullius* [a legal term meaning land that belongs to no one] rather than build on preexisting institutional architecture. (Cliffe & Manning, 2008, pp. 164-5)

William Reno (2008) cautions external actors not to rush in to aid host nation governments in delivering services without first examining existing governance structures. External actors' actions can unwittingly duplicate, circumvent, or thwart the efforts of popularly supported sub-state entities. "To the extent that sub-state groups are shut out of formal programs to rebuild state institutions, some local people may interpret that as political marginalization of their communities" (p. 144). They may actively resist, sometimes violently, external intervention.

Reno suggests that complaints from international actors about host nation government officials' lack of capacity or political will may instead reveal "the extent to which sub-state groups either challenge what they consider to be infringements on their prerogatives or even claim the allegiance of significant numbers of state employees" (p. 156-7). He further postulates that sub-state entities "are likely to be the most effective way for international actors to achieve their ambitious goals of building the kind of governance that meets their standards and to maintain a critical level of popular support" (p. 158).

While the U.S. military has created new doctrine with civil considerations, land conflict is inherently uncivil. It is politically and socially messy, even pernicious, creating gloating winners and very sore losers. The lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan are clearly evident in *Stability Techniques* (ATTP 3-07.5, U.S. Department of the Army, 2012). Assertions that land issues belong to the host nation will continue and validly so. But Army operators will now train and have doctrine on how to progress toward that end state. For example, when the host nation government lacks presence, legitimacy, or capacity, land disputes might still be addressed via sub-state entities. *Stability Techniques*, Chapter 3-93 states:

Long-standing disputes over ownership and control of property often occur in failed states. Such conflicts include disputes over possession of livestock, water distribution rights, land ownership for farming or grazing, or ownership of homes abandoned by their owners and resettled by squatters. Transitional authorities implementing dispute resolution mechanisms early helps prevent escalating violence that often occurs when people seek to enforce resolution on their own terms. (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012, p. 3-15)

The *Stability Techniques* anticipates the war-to-peace transformation, and Chapter 3-98 prudently seeks an emphasis towards "resolving disputes through a formal legal system rather than by negotiating through local leaders. Mechanisms for resolving property disputes need enough structure to ensure consistency and fairness but enough flexibility to achieve justice in many situations" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011, p. 3-16). While not making any decisions about LTPR claims or disposition of people's properties, civil-military operators might be tasked with compiling a roster of contested property for legal adjudication. The same chapter sagely suggests that "effective Army units involve local leaders when compiling a roster of contested property. Especially in the absence or incompleteness of written records, local leaders know the locations of contested properties and often can identify people involved in ongoing property disputes" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012, p. 3-16). The next section sets forth Ghanaian Customary Land Secretariats as a positive exemplar of sub-state governance with the potential to improve government land administration.

Customary Land Secretariats in Ghana

When U.S. President Barack Obama (2009) visited Ghana, he proclaimed, "For far too many Africans, conflict is a part of life. . . . There are wars over land and wars over resources. And it is still far too easy for those without conscience to manipulate whole communities into fighting among faiths and tribes." Ghana, a comparatively stable and progressive African state, is one of four pilot countries in the Obama Administration's new Partnership for Growth Initiative. The USAID has among its developmental aims for Ghana to see customary LTPR rules put in writing in order for all parties to understand rights, restrictions, and responsibilities pertaining to customary lands. The demarcation of fuzzy boundaries in customary areas is another goal. As population pressures on the African continent increase, boundary demarcation is a prodigious conflict mitigator (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011). One promising sub-state organ to carry out these and other LTPR-strengthening measures is the Customary Land Secretariat (CLS). Ghana exercises a dual management of land. Perhaps surprisingly, 80% of land in Ghana is managed by customary (as opposed to statutory) law.

All land in Ghana falls under one of four distinct property rights regimes. The most prevalent is *stool lands* (termed *skin lands* in the north), under which property rights are vested in a traditional chief called an overlord, in the form of a land title called an allodial title; the chief administers the land on behalf of the community. Family lands are similar, but here title is held by extended families with some historical claim to the land rather than by chiefs, usually because there has not traditionally been an overlord with authority over land in the area. Stool lands and family lands comprise approximately 80% of the land in Ghana. In the context of stool and family lands in particular, the law allows for a number of secondary property rights or arrangements. One such arrangement on stool and family lands is referred to as customary

freehold, which is a right in perpetuity that can be transferred, bequeathed, and held in private. Another, similar form of landholding on stool and family lands is called stranger usufruct rights. These rights are granted to migrant households, as well as to descendants of migrant households. There also exist sharecropping arrangements which are referred to as *abunu* or *abusa* depending on the percentage of land or production that is divided between the original rights holder and the temporary land user. Finally, allodial title holders may enter into formal leasehold agreements of up to 99 years in duration with other Ghanaians or up to 50 years with non-Ghanaians (Ghana Partnership for Growth Interagency Land Tenure Working Group, 2011).

Figure 1. **A 99-year lease from an allodial title holding chief.**

Even within the urbanized Greater Accra Region of Ghana, land disputes can turn violent. According to Onoma (2010):

> Chiefs enlist armed gangs of land guards to protect some land users, while forcing others to pay again for land they have already bought, or blocking efforts to develop purchased land and thereby triggering development covenants that allow the land to be repossessed. In some cases, these groups physically assault developers or burn down partially completed buildings. (pp. 129-132)

Aapengnuo argues for an impartial indigenous actor, kin to an ombudsman, who can help defuse tensions. Community perception of impartiality is important, and the sub-state CLSs have proven to be a "systematic means by which one's grievances can be fairly addressed [and which] reduce the likelihood that individuals will feel the need to take corrective measures into their own hands" (2010, p. 17).

Stability Techniques also addresses land matters in post-conflict environments. Chapter 3-93 states that transitional authorities "expect challenges when establishing a land registry with an agreed-upon documentation system to record and track land and property issues for long-term resolution" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012, p. 3-15). Table 3-6 in Stability Techniques list three phases Army units pass through to support property dispute resolution:

- Initial response: implement dispute resolution mechanisms; publicize dispute resolution; and coordinate dispute resolution process
- Transformation: continue resolving disputes
- Fostering sustainability: transfer responsibility to the host nation; monitor and report; and provide guidance to resolve disputes (U.S. Department of the Army, 2012, p. 3-15)

Not surprisingly, the tasks above are nearly identical to the LTPR-strengthening goals of CLSs. CLSs can best be described as "a useful model for an accountable, harmonious and transparent customary land administration system that utilizes simple and cost-effective land rights documentation practices that are suitably attuned" to local interests (USAID, 2011, p. 9). These sub-state entities seek to improve the accuracy and efficiency of customary land administration, which, in turn, should lead to increased investment, appreciation of land values, and revenue generation. They operate within the jurisdiction of customary leaders and responsibly manage and record land allocations and transactions made by customary authorities. "In this manner, CLSs bring greater clarity and transparency to the customary system, as similar institutions have played an important role in this regard in other African countries, for example, the Communal Land Boards in Namibia and Botswana" (p. 5). However, implementation of the 37 CLSs in Ghana since 2004 has been uneven. The capacity of the CLSs ranges from fully operational in some jurisdictions to barely functional in others. Their effectiveness depends on adequate donor support, the chiefs' willingness and ability to pay staff, and the staff's level of training (p. 4). The work of CLSs is an avenue where U.S. government assistance can tangibly

build the capacity of host nation governments to improve security, rule of law (in this case customary law), and the economic livelihoods of their citizens.

The Community, Land and Development Foundation (www.colandef.com) is an indigenous Ghanaian vehicle that commands attention. COLANDEF specializes in building capacities of sub-state entities such as CLSs. Education and training are paramount to this effort and COLANDEF does both well. According to Nana Ama Yirrah, COLANDEF's chief executive officer, CLSs must first become familiar with the customary and national frameworks guiding land governance in Ghana in order to conduct LTPR public information campaigns, and to create mechanisms for improving governance and protecting land rights for a vast number of stakeholders. The work of CLSs is challenged by mistrust among actors and ubiquitous male domination in the land and property sectors. Customary land institutions have long acted autonomously in administering their lands and are themselves challenged when dealing with state agencies, often viewing expansion of government as interference in their affairs. Another charge to CLSs is the creation of community-based land administration systems to support documentation and public information on customary land holdings and transactions. But the arduous effort is worthwhile when customary land management is viewed as legitimate, efficient, and accessible. Moreover, increased formalization paves the way for future linking of customary governance institutions to government land management (Yirrah, personal interview, 2011).

Figure 2. **Photo of author, who accompanied a COLANDEF representative on a public information campaign near Savelugu, Ghana, March 2011.**

Further impetus for external actors to engage sub-state entities who exercise land governance is offered by Jolyne Sanjak, chief program officer at Seattle-based Landesa (formerly Rural Development Institute). "Political will is malleable," she says. "The collective push from civil society organizations, private sector businesses, and investors can positively influence developing nations to elevate LTPR on their domestic agendas" (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

Conclusion

Customary Land Secretariats, an example of Ghanaian civil society exercising customary land governance, are presented as an innovation with the potential to fuel economic growth and mitigate explosive conflict situations over land. Aapengnuo (2010) reiterates that the conflict driver in much of Africa is not what meets the eye. "Often it is the politicization of ethnicity and not ethnicity per se that stokes the attitudes of perceived injustice, lack of recognition, and exclusion" (p. 14). In no other sector are injustices, human rights violations, and social conflicts as rife as in African land grabs and the circumstances prompting mass migration to peri-urban slums.

Authority over land cements power. Where government is weak or fails, sub-state entities will exercise land governance. The end state goals of future Stability Operations cannot be attained when external actors ignore or slough off an element of peacebuilding as important as land administration, leaving the related problems to host nation governments ill-equipped for the task. Lasting peace remains elusive when peacebuilders, by naiveté or force of habit, deal exclusively with government officials and thus alienate the customary leaders whose support is essential to mission success. This parallel societal layer undoubtedly compounds already complex operations. However, conflict management efforts during a war-to-peace transition that do not engage sub-state entities risk committing a serious cultural blunder. There is no reason to wait until that later phase of operations. U.S. defense, diplomacy, and development (Phase Zero shaping) would do well to examine and further the work of CLSs in order to clearly understand that *governance* is not synonymous with *government*. By seeking out and engaging sub-state entities that exercise land governance, external peacebuilding actors can positively compound the effects of their interventions to reduce population pressures on the human landscape.

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Chapter 12

International Waters: Conflict, Cooperation, and Transformation

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Water management is, by definition, conflict management; water, unlike other scarce, consumable resources, is used to fuel all facets of society, from biology to economies to aesthetics and spiritual practice. Moreover, it fluctuates wildly in space and time; its management is usually fragmented; and it is often subject to vague, arcane, and/or contradictory legal principles. As such, there is no such thing as managing water for a single purpose—all water management is multi-objective and based on navigating competing interests. Within a nation these interests include domestic users, agriculturalists, hydropower generators, recreationalists, and environmentalists, any two of which are regularly at odds, and the complexity of finding mutually acceptable solutions increases exponentially as more stakeholders are involved. Add international boundaries, and the difficulty again increases substantially.

While press reports of international waters often focus on conflict, what has been more encouraging is that, throughout the world, water also induces cooperation, even in particularly hostile basins and even as disputes rage over other issues. This has been true from the Jordan (Arabs and Israelis) to the Indus (Indians and Pakistanis) to the Kura-Araks (Georgians, Armenians, and Azeris). Despite research that finds repeatedly and empirically that water-related cooperation overwhelms conflict over the last fifty years (see Gerlak, Heikkila, & Wolf, 2010), prevailing theories fail to explain this phenomenon. Certainly, there is a long history of conflicts over, or related to, shared freshwater resources. But there is also a long, and in many ways deeper, history of water-related cooperation. (See Carius, Dabelko, & Wolf, 2004; Conca & Dabelko, 2002; and Wolf, Kramer, Carius, & Dabelko, 2005, for complete discussions of the relationship between water and security.)

This historical record suggests that international water disputes do get resolved, even among enemies, and even as conflicts erupt over other issues. Some of the world's most vociferous enemies have negotiated water agreements or are in the process of doing so, and the institutions they have created often prove to be resilient, even when relations are strained.

It is not a matter of whether water leads to conflict or cooperation—both are true, and often in the same place (see Zeitoun & Warner, 2006). Shared water often leads to tensions between nations, which in turn offer a vehicle for dialogue and, regularly, some form of joint management. In fact, a general pattern has emerged for international basins over time which exemplifies both conflict and cooperation. Riparians of an international basin implement water development projects unilaterally first on water within their territory, in attempts to avoid the political intricacies of the shared resource. At some point, one of the riparians, generally the regional power, will implement a project that impacts at least one of its neighbors. This project

can, in the absence of relations or institutions conducive to conflict resolution, become a flashpoint, heightening tensions and regional instability, and this in turn leads to negotiations, treaties, and/or collaborative river basin organizations and mechanisms for future conflict management.

The economic and engineering benefits of cooperation between riparian states within the world's international basins can be clearly demonstrated. Through greater efficiencies, unit costs generally come down, and economies of scale offer greater development opportunities. In addition to those above, case studies from rivers from the Senegal to the Columbia support the theory.

Nonetheless, there are basins all over the world where cooperation between co-riparians is often lacking or even obstructed by one party or another. Of the world's 276 international basins, 166 are covered by no treaty provisions whatsoever. Moreover, multilateral basins are, almost without exception, governed by bilateral treaties—only one third of multilateral basins are entirely covered by treaty provisions, and most of those are bilateral—precluding the integrated basin management long-advocated by water managers. Eight major multilateral basins include at least one pair of countries with comprehensive agreements, while at least one other pair has no coverage whatsoever. These basins are the Amur, Aral Sea, Elbe, Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghan, Garonne, Indus, Rhine, and Tigris-Euphrates/Shatt al Arab basins. Together, these basins encompass 1.45 billion people and 7.24 million km^2 (DeStefano et al., 2012).
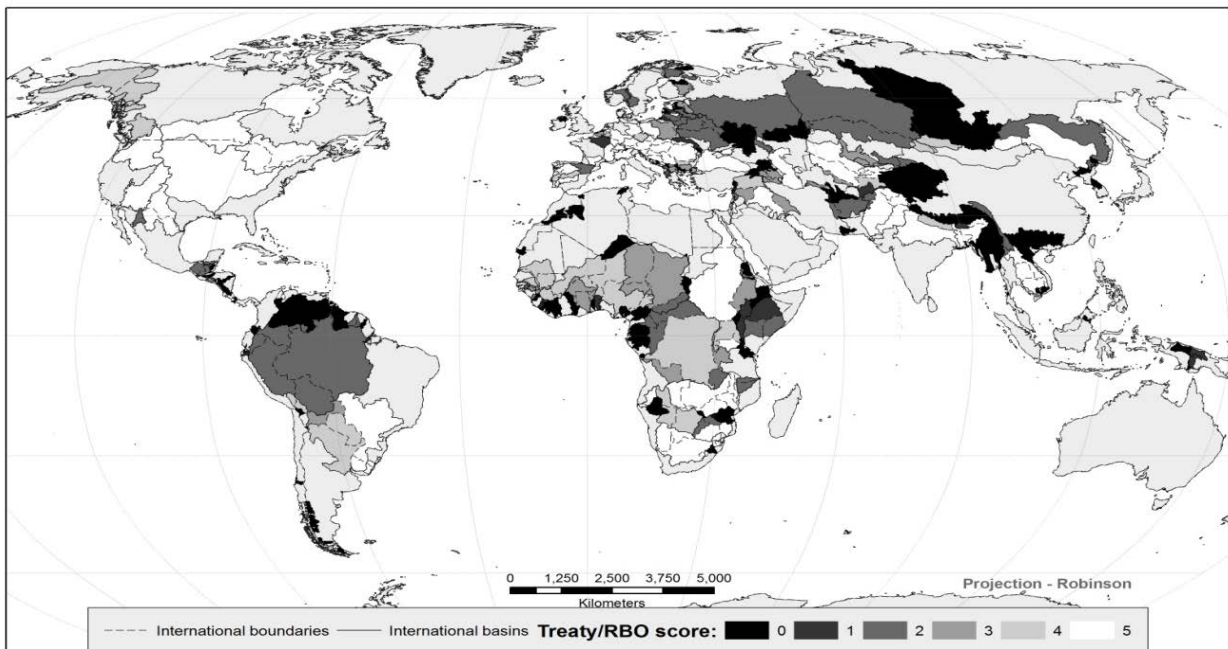

Figure 1. **Distribution of treaty/river basin organizations (RBOs); basin-country units in red have no treaty or RBO coverage.**

Hydropolitical Resilience and Vulnerability

In general, the concepts of "resilience" and "vulnerability" as related to water resources are often assessed within the framework of "sustainability," and relate to the ability of bio-physical systems to adapt to change (Gunderson & Pritchard, 2002). As the sustainability discourse has broadened in recent years to include human systems, research too has been increasingly geared toward identifying indicators of resilience and vulnerability within this broader context (Bolte, Hulse, Gregory, & Smith, 2004; Lonergan, Gustavson, & Carter, 2000; Turner et al., 2003). In parallel, dialogue on "security" has migrated from traditional issues of war and peace to begin incorporating the human-environment relationship in the relatively new field of "environmental security" (see UNEP, 2004; Vogel & O'Brien, 2004).

As the potential for conflict and violence to erupt over international waters became increasingly apparent, the term "hydropolitics" emerged as a way to describe the ability of geopolitical institutions to manage shared water resources in a politically sustainable manner, meaning without tensions or conflict between political entities. "Hydropolitical resilience," then, is defined as the complex human-environmental system's ability to adapt to permutations and change within these systems, and "hydropolitical vulnerability" is defined as the risk of political dispute over shared water systems. Wolf, Yoffe, and Giordano (2003) suggested the following relationship between change, institutions, and hydropolitical vulnerability: "The likelihood of conflict rises as the rate of change within the basin exceeds the institutional capacity to absorb that change" (p. 43). This suggests that there are two sides to the dispute setting: the rate of change in the system and the institutional capacity (see Figure 2 for a conceptual model).
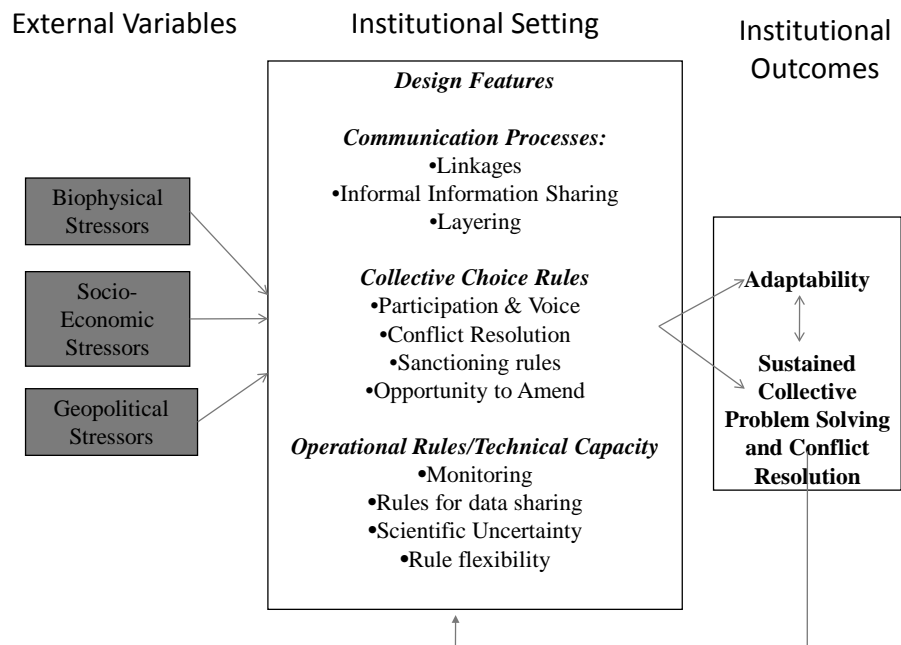

Figure 2. **A model of institutional robustness in transboundary resource settings (Gerlak et al., 2010).**

In general, most of the parameters commonly identified as indicators of water conflict are only weakly linked to dispute in reality. Institutional capacity within a basin—whether defined as water management bodies or treaties, or generally positive international relations—is as important, if not more important, than the physical aspects of a system. That said, rapid changes in either institutions or the physical system, when they outpace the institutional capacity to absorb those changes, are at the root of most water conflict. For example, the rapid institutional change in "internationalized" basins—basins that include the management structures of newly independent states—has resulted in disputes in areas formerly under British administration (e.g., the Nile, Jordan, Tigris-Euphrates, Indus, and Ganges-Brahmaputra), as well as in the former Soviet Union (the Aral tributaries and the Kura-Araks). On the physical side, rapid change most detrimentally outpaces institutional capacity in basins that include unilateral development projects *and* the absence of cooperative regimes, such as treaties, river basin organizations (RBOs), or technical working groups, or when relations are especially tenuous over other issues (Wolf et al., 2003).

The general assumption of this relationship, then, is that rapid change tends to indicate vulnerability while institutional capacity tends to indicate resilience, and that the two sides need to be assessed in conjunction with each other for a more accurate gauge of hydropolitical sustainability. Building on these relationships, the characteristics of a basin that would tend toward resilience to change include:

- International agreements and institutions, such as River Basin Organizations (RBOs)
- A history of collaborative projects
- Generally positive political relations
- Higher levels of economic development

In contrast, characteristics that tend toward vulnerability would include:
- Rapid environmental change
- Increased hydrologic variability
- Rapid population growth or asymmetric economic growth
- Major unilateral development projects
- The absence of institutional capacity
- The potential for "internationalization" of a basin
- Generally hostile relations

When these characteristics are assessed in combination, the settings most likely to be conflictive become apparent. These would include locations where major water projects such as dams, diversions, or development schemes are being planned *in the absence* of agreements or collaborative organizations that can mitigate the transboundary impacts of these projects.

Change, Capacity, and Scale: The Empirical Evidence

Many researchers have been compiling global datasets of various aspects of political conflict, and adding substantive knowledge to trends in shared waterways.[28] A number of studies have been able to draw on these datasets to report on global trends in water conflict and cooperation. What follows is a summary of those findings, with an important caveat: global studies, by nature, are generalizations, based often on incomplete or inaccurate data. Moreover, studies based on general datasets (rather than those based on water resources), only report statistical significance, and should not be used to assume causality. All statistical findings should only be used as intended, to point out *possible* sets of relations and likely directions for more focused case-study approaches.

As mentioned, the Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database, or TFDD (2010), has been tapped extensively for lessons learned in hydropolitics, described above and in more detail in Wolf et al. (2003) and Yoffe, Wolf, and Giordano (2003). The use of "event data"—interactions between countries or entities that are coded along a conflict-cooperation continuum—has helped identify empirical indicators of conflict and, through timelines of conflict and cooperation, also helped provide nuanced understandings of temporal relations.

Other general relationships (or lack of relationships) noted from the Wolf et al. (2003) Oregon State University study include:

- Countries that cooperate in general cooperate about water; countries that dispute in general dispute over water

- Higher GDPs are not statistically correlated with greater cooperation

- Regardless of how it is measured, water stress is not a statistically significant indicator of water dispute

- Neither government type nor average climate show any patterns of impact on water disputes

In reference to the above point, it is worth mentioning that the data in Wolf et al. challenges prevailing wisdom: democracies seem not to be more cooperative than other types of government—in fact, autocratic countries are only barely less cooperative than the strongest democracies. With regard to average climate, there is little perceptible difference between most climate types, with the notable exception of humid meso-thermal, apparently the most cooperative climate (Wolf et al., 2003).

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[28] These include Azar's (1980) Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB), 1948-1978; Davies' Global Event Data System (GEDS) Project, 1979-1994; the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) dataset, collected by Jonathan Wilkenfeld and Michael Brecher (1997); Penn State's Correlates of War (Correlates of War Project, 2006), and sources dedicated to water resources and hydropolitics (see especially the African Transboundary Water Law Page; the International Water Law Project; International Water Law Research Institute).

Yoffe et al. (2004) reported on subsequent findings from TFDD, including:

- Work by Meredith Giordano, Mark Giordano, and Wolf (2002), which quantitatively explored the linkages between internal and international water and non-water events for three specific regions (the Middle East, southern Africa, and Southeast Asia), and found generally synchronous chronologies (i.e., similar periods identified as conflictive and cooperative, for both internal and international relations) for the Middle East and Southeast Asia, but not for southern Africa.

- Work by Stahl and Wolf (2003), which refined the question of climate, and looked specifically at the relationship between variability and conflict. The research found that historically, extreme events of conflict were more frequent in marginal climates with highly variable hydrologic conditions, while the riparians of rivers with less extreme natural conditions have been more moderate in their conflict/cooperation relationship. The entire causal relationship between hydroclimatology and water-related political relations also depends on socioeconomic conditions and institutional capacity, as well as the timing and occurrence of changes and extremes in a country and basin.

- Within nations, too, there are many examples of internal water conflicts, ranging from interstate violence and death along the Cauvery River in India (Baviskar, 1995; Anand, 2004); to the U.S., where Oregon ranchers sabotaged an intake meant to keep Klamath River water from being diverted to ranchers during a drought; to intertribal bloodshed between Maasai herdsmen and Kikuyu farmers in Kenya (BBC News Africa, 2005). Recent research on internal disputes suggests that as geographical scale drops, the likelihood and intensity of violence rises (see Giordano et al., 2002).

Nils Petter Gleditsch of the Center for the Study of Civil War, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), leads another group of researchers who have conducted "large-n" studies relating water to conflict. This group relates issues of hydropolitics to the Correlates of War dataset, and their findings to date include the following:

- Toset, Gleditsch, and Hegre (2001) show that two countries that share a river statistically, but moderately, have an increased probability of a militarized interstate dispute over and above mere contiguity. They also find that the upstream-downstream relationship appears to be the shared river situation most frequently associated with conflict, in contrast to adjacent streams.

- Furlong, Gleditsch, and Hegre (2006) find that these relationships hold even when controlling for the length of the land boundary between countries, using a new dataset on boundary length developed by Furlong and Gleditsch in 2003.

- Gleditsch, Furlong, Hegre, Lacina, and Owen (2006) confirm that the relationship between shared rivers and militarized disputes holds for an improved database on shared rivers, derived from the database on river basins developed by Wolf et al. (2003). They find little support for the idea that "fuzzy" river boundaries provide a source of conflict, limited support for the upstream-downstream scenario, and more

support for the importance of the size of the basin.

- Gleditsch and Hamner (2001) found, on the basis of events data for the period 1948–92, that shared rivers and water scarcity were associated with increased cooperation between countries, as well as conflict. A similar finding is recorded by Brochmann (2006) using data for trade and joint membership in international organizations as indicators in cooperation.

Of course, not all "large-n" empirical studies come from research groups; individual researchers have also been applying their analytical skills to these global datasets. Some advances include:

- Song and Whittington (2004) developed a typology of international rivers that relates pairs of co-riparians by their "power" (as measured by per capita GDP), their "size" (population), and their "upstream-downstream" relationship. The authors then drew out preliminary findings about the likelihoods of treaty development based on their typology, finding that basins with countervailing riparians, one with large size and one with high GDP, were marginally more likely to enter into treaties than those in other settings.

- Dinar (2004) did an extensive assessment connecting river geography, water scarcity, and treaty cooperation, and suggests that, counter to the "water scarcity leads to conflict" claim, long-term water scarcity has a significant influence on levels of cooperation. Additional variables that are considered in explaining cooperation patterns include trade, level of governance among the basin countries, and the geography of the basin.

Overcoming the Costs of Non-Cooperation: From Rights to Needs to Interests

How are agreements actually achieved? On what basis do parties overcome the costs of non-cooperation? Generally a shift in measures of success is required, from rights to needs to interests. Parties generally base their initial positions in terms of rights—the sense that a riparian is entitled to a certain allocation based on how the water flows or chronology of use. Upstream riparians often invoke some variation of the Harmon Doctrine, claiming that water rights originate where the water falls. India claimed absolute sovereignty in the early phases of negotiations over the Indus Waters Treaty, as did France in the Lac Lanoux case, and Palestine over the West Bank aquifer. Downstream riparians often claim absolute river integrity, claiming rights to an undisturbed system or, if on an exotic stream, historic rights based on their history of use. Spain insisted on absolute integrity regarding the Lac Lanoux project, while Egypt claimed historic rights against first Sudan, and later Ethiopia, on the Nile.

In almost all of the disputes which have been resolved, however, particularly on arid or exotic streams, the paradigms used for negotiations have not been rights-based at all—neither on relative hydrography nor chronology of use—but rather have been needs-based. *Needs* are

defined by irrigable land, population, or the requirements of a specific project (see Table 1).[29] In agreements between Egypt and Sudan signed in 1929 and in 1959, for example, allocations were arrived at on the basis of local needs, primarily of agriculture. Egypt argued for a greater share of the Nile because of its larger population and extensive irrigation works. In 1959, Sudan and Egypt then divided future water from development equally between the two. Current allocations of 55.5 BCM/yr for Egypt and 18.5 BCM/yr for Sudan reflect these relative needs (Waterbury, 1979).[30]

Table 1

Examples of Needs-based Criteria

Treaty	Criteria for Allocations
Egypt/Sudan (1929, 1959, Nile)	"Acquired" rights from existing uses, plus even division of any additional water resulting from development projects
Johnston Accord (1956, Jordan)	Amount of irrigable land within the watershed in each state
India/Pakistan (1960, Indus)	Historic and planned use (for Pakistan) plus geographic allocations (western vs. eastern rivers)
South Africa (Southwest Africa)/Portugal (Angola) (1969, Kunene)	Allocations for human and animal needs, and initial irrigation
Israel-Palestinian Interim Agreement (1995, shared aquifers)	Population patterns and irrigation needs

Likewise along the Jordan River, the only water agreement for that basin ever negotiated (although not ratified) until very recently, the Johnston Accord, emphasized the needs rather than the inherent rights of each of the riparians. Johnston's approach, based on a report performed under the direction of the Tennessee Valley Authority, was to estimate, without regard to political boundaries, the water needs for all irrigable land within the Jordan Valley basin which could be irrigated by gravity flow (Chas. T. Main, Inc., 1953). National allocations were then based on these in-basin agricultural needs, with the understanding that each country could then use the water as it wished, including to divert it out of basin. This was not only an acceptable formula to the parties at the time, but it allowed for a breakthrough in negotiations when a land

[29] Here we distinguish between "rights" in terms of a sense of entitlement, and legal rights. Obviously, once negotiations lead to allocations, regardless of how they are determined, each riparian has legal "rights" to that water, even if the allocations were determined by "needs." The point is that it is generally easier to come to a joint definition of "needs" than it is of "rights."

[30] It should be pointed out that not everyone's needs were considered in the Nile Agreements, which included only two of the ten riparian states: Egypt and Sudan, both minor contributors to the river's flow. The notable exception to the treaty, and the one which might argue most adamantly for greater sovereignty, is Ethiopia, which contributes between 75-85% of the Nile's flow.

survey of Jordan concluded that its future water needs were lower than previously thought. Years later, Israel and Palestine came back to needs in the Interim Agreement of 1995, where Israel first recognized Palestinian water rights on the West Bank; a formula for agriculture and per capita consumption determined future Palestinian water needs at 70-80 MCM/yr and Israel agreed to provide 28.6 MCM/yr toward those needs.

Needs are the most prevalent criteria for allocations along arid or exotic streams outside of the Middle East as well. Allocations of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo and the Colorado between Mexico and the U.S. are based on Mexican irrigation requirements. Bangladeshi requirements determined the allocations of the Ganges, and Indus negotiations deferred to Pakistani projects (although estimates of needs are still disputed and changing, particularly in these latter two examples).

From the global experience in determining needs, no one criterion seems to be necessarily more effective than any other; a measure which is determined in dialogue between riparians generates more buy-in than one imposed from outside (although neutral third parties have often provided the technology to help quantify needs). Moreover, once the needs-based allocations are determined, it is not generally required that water actually be applied to those needs, and even beyond this, specific allocations are generally *not* readjusted, despite the fact that needs change drastically over time. For example, the Johnston Accord determined allocations based on potential gravity-fed irrigated agriculture *within* the Jordan basin. Once the numbers were derived, and Jordan and Israel implicitly agreed, Israel applied most of its allocation to other uses entirely, many of them outside of the basin. Jordan and Israel adhere to the Johnston allocations to this day, despite all of the dramatic changes to all water-related parameters within the basin over the last 50 years.

One might speculate as to why negotiations move from rights-based to needs-based criteria for allocation. The first reason may have something to do with the psychology of negotiations. Rothman (1995), among others, points out that negotiations ideally move along three stages: the adversarial stage, where each side defines its positions or rights; the reflexive stage, where the needs of each side determining their positions is addressed; and finally, the integrative stage, where negotiators brainstorm together to address each side's underlying interests. The negotiations here seem to follow this pattern from rights to needs and, occasionally, to interests. While each negotiator may initially see him- or herself as Egyptian or Israeli or Indian, where the rights of one's own country are paramount, over time one must realize to some degree that even one's enemy, be he or she Sudanese, Palestinian, or Pakistani, requires the same amount of water for the same use with the same methods as oneself.

The second reason for the shift from rights to needs may simply be that rights are not quantifiable and needs are. We have seen the vague guidance that the 1997 Convention provides for allocations—a series of occasionally conflicting parameters which are to be considered as a whole. If two nations insist on their respective rights of upstream versus down, for example, there is no spectrum along which to bargain, no common frame of reference. One can much more readily determine a needs-based criterion—irrigable land or population, for example—and quantify each nation's needs. Even with differing interpretations, once both sides feel

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comfortable that their minimum quantitative needs are being met, talks eventually turn to straightforward bargaining over numbers along a common spectrum.

From Rights and Needs to Interests: "Baskets of Benefits"

One productive approach to the development of transboundary waters has been to transcend rights and needs entirely, and to examine rather the benefits in the basin from a regional approach. This has regularly required the riparians to move past looking at the water as a commodity to be divided—a zero-sum, rights-based approach—and rather to develop an approach which equitably allocates not the water, but the benefits derived therefrom: a positive-sum, integrative approach. The boundary waters agreement between the U.S. and Canada, for example, allocates water according to equal benefits, usually defined by hydropower generation. This results in the seemingly odd arrangement that power may be exported out of basin for gain, but the water itself may not. In the 1964 treaty on the Columbia, an arrangement was worked out where the U.S. paid Canada for the benefits of flood control and Canada was granted rights to divert water between the Columbia and Kootenai for hydropower. Likewise, the 1975 Mekong accord, between Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, defines "equality of right" not as equal shares of water, but as equal rights to use water on the basis of each riparian's economic and social needs. The relative nature of "beneficial" uses is exhibited in a 1950 agreement on the Niagara, flowing between the U.S and Canada, which provides a greater flow over the famous falls during "show times" of summer daylight hours, when tourist dollars are worth more per cubic meter than the alternate use in hydropower generation (Delli Priscoli & Wolf, 2009).

In many water-related treaties, water issues are dealt with alone, separate from any other political or resource issues between countries—water *qua* water. By separating the two realms of "high" (political) and "low" (resource economical) politics, or by ignoring other resources which might be included in an agreement, some have argued, the process is either likely to fail—as in the case of the 1955 Johnston accords on the Jordan—or more often to achieve a sub-optimum development arrangement, as is currently the case of the Indus agreement, signed in 1960. Increasingly, however, linkages are being made between water and politics, as well as between water and other resources. These multi-resource linkages may offer more opportunities for creative solutions to be generated, allowing for greater economic efficiency through a "basket" of benefits.

The Disconnect between Rationality and Transcendence

At the end of the day, negotiations are about people and relationships, not solely about geopolitics and economic interests. Which begs the question: are negotiations rational? Or is something more going on in the room, something connected more to energy and transformation? To gain insight into these questions, it is worth looking at the values and philosophies inherent within the negotiating context.

The Enlightenment Rift: When North/West Meets South/East[31]

The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century left a profound rift between the worlds of transcendence and of reason, one with intense implications for today's clash of ideas. In temporal terms, it suggested that day-to-day considerations should be gauged by means of rational, "objective" concepts, while the world's spiritual dimension should be considered separately, in the evening at home or within one's Friday, Saturday, or Sunday community (Martin, 2007). Over time, "rationality" dictated the structure of subsequent paradigms, from economics to science to modernity, to where today we in the North/West are consistently satisfied to ask the "what" without the "why," at least in public discourse. We talk comfortably of economic growth rates, for example, without the accompanying discussion of what simply creating and owning more stuff does to our souls. We regularly turn to benefit-cost analyses as a decision-making tool, where all factors must be reduced to economic value, explicitly excluding often profound, but intangible, considerations.

But the idea of separating out rationality from spirituality is a fundamentally North/West construct. As Smith (1992) eloquently puts it, "The modern West is the first society to view the physical world as a closed system" (p. 96), whereas much of the thinking in the global South and East often retains its integration of rationality and spirituality, balancing between self and community, between justice and mercy, and between boundaries and expanse.

This balanced construct exists fairly universally, and can influence quite a lot with respect to approaches to resource allocation, negotiations, and understanding of relationships. The unity of a balance of self and other, light and dark, can be seen in the *Taijitu*, the traditional Taoist symbol for yin and yang, as well as in the Kabbalistic divine spheres of Justice (*din*) and Mercy (*chessed*). In a Christian construct, the triad of justice, loving-kindness, and compassion has been described through the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and some Christian Kabbalists make these comparisons explicit. In Islam, *Al-Hakam*, the Judge, *Ar-Rahman*, the Merciful, and *Ar-Rahim*, the Compassionate, are three more common of the 99 names of Allah, and Abou El Fadl (2004) describes Islamic processes for "institutionalizing mercy and compassion in social interaction" (p. 5).

So, to generalize, the heavy (over-)emphasis on rationality and the rights of the individual as opposed to inclusion of spirit and the needs of the community is disproportionately a North/West phenomenon, associated primarily with the non-Asian developed world. The global South and East often retain a more integrated view of issues of the individual with the community or one's spirituality with one's rationality. These two profoundly contradictory worldviews—the North/West's dichotomous views of rationality and spirituality, justice and mercy, in stark contrast to the South/East's holistic, integrated balance—clash regularly and intensely across the world stage, from foreign policies to expectations of immigrant communities

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[31] I acknowledge the wild over-generalization involved in dividing up the world between the global North/West and the South/East. This construct should be understood to be infinitely more porous and ephemeral than dichotomous, but roughly follows the geography of Hall's (1976) "high context" and "low context" cultures (though the model has been critiqued). In very general terms, the former includes Europe and much of the non-indigenous Americas, while the latter includes most of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

to dynamics in the United Nations. One might note the implication this geography has on the current "clash of civilizations," but one can use water as a microcosm of these larger issues.

Water and the Economics of Cooperation

The geography of this post-Enlightenment rift is, well, enlightening. Figure 4 shows the flow of water-related foreign assistance, primarily from the developed to the developing worlds. What this figure illustrates is the extensive interface between very different value structures.
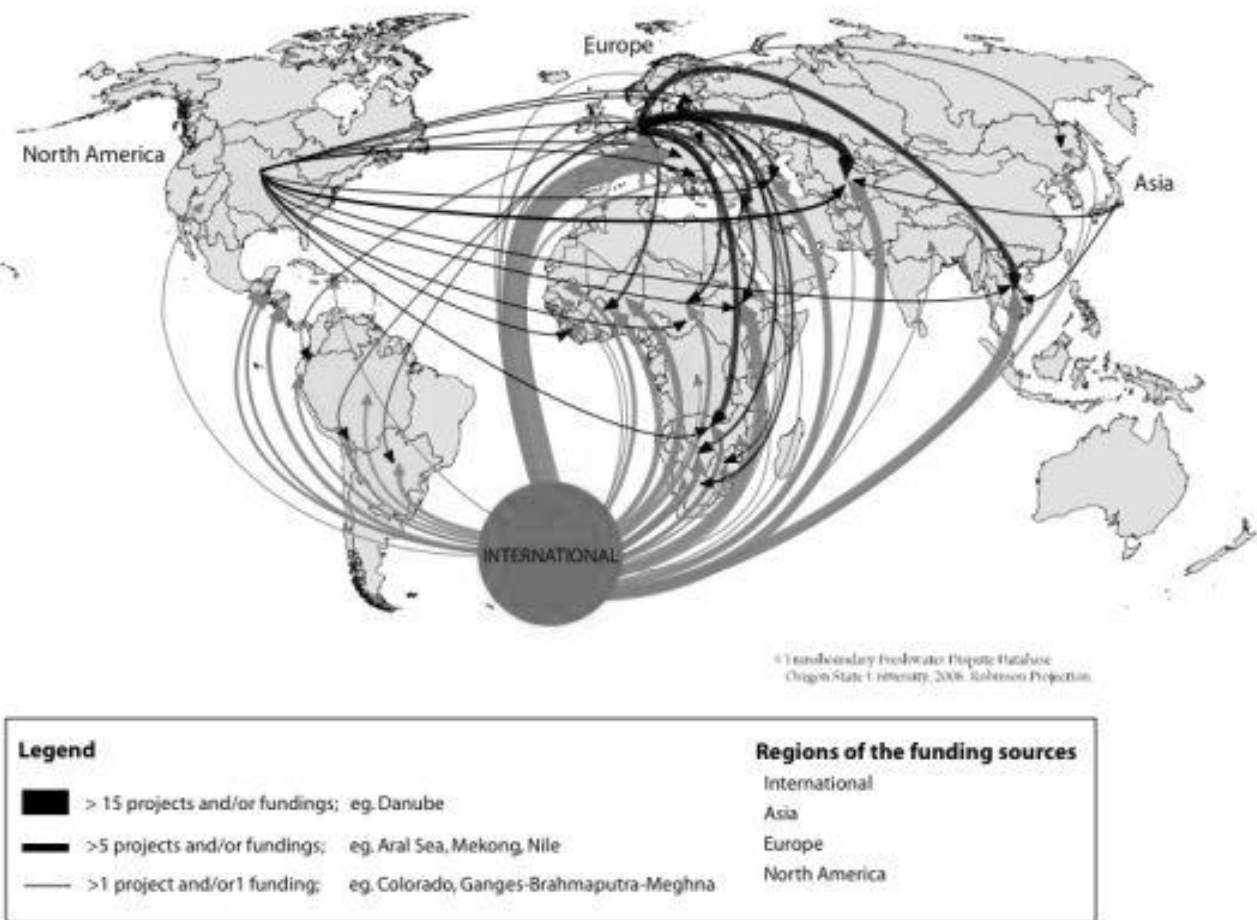
Figure 4. **Sources of funding for water-related projects in international basins.**

In recent decades, for example, the global North/West has approached international water management from an increasingly economic framework, most notably through the 1992 Dublin Principles, which state: "Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good" (ICWE, 1992, Guiding Principle No. 4). This was the first explicit recognition of water as an economic good, and this principle is often quoted in literature

that has been published since its establishment. Agenda 21, which emanated from the Rio Conference on Environment & Development (1992), echoed this theme, and the World Bank and other development banks have increasingly been urging conflict resolution through moving from thinking of water as a zero-sum commodity to negotiating over the benefits of water, seeing it as a positive-sum commodity that can be enhanced and quantified through economic principles (see Delli Priscoli & Wolf, 2009, for a history).

Yet, these economic principles, so prevalent in the global North/West and encouraged through North/West-sponsored development agencies and banks, explicitly contradict local and indigenous practices throughout the developing world. For example, different Islamic legal tenets apply to different water sources, basically divided by whether the water is "provided by God"—i.e., is from a natural surface or groundwater source which is available year-round—or whether it is "provided by man"—i.e., human labor that creates a cistern or an attendant canal system. According to some Islamic interpretations, "God-given" waters may not be bought or sold, and their use is available to all equally. To many, the idea of buying and selling water is both repugnant (like "buying and selling one's children," quoted in Wolf, 2000), and contrary to the tenets of Islam (Faruqui, Biswas, & Bino, 2001). It may well be that much disincentive for coalition-building stems from a deep disconnect in the assumptions and values we are using in our discourse.

Monitoring for Hydropolitical Hot Spots

Besides the general degradation in water quantity, quality, and timing, understanding the link between change and institutional capacity allows one to monitor specific indicators for the likelihood of future political tensions between nations. As mentioned, monitoring requires regular assessments of changes within a basin, both on the biophysical and the institutional sides. Our prior work on Basins at Risk and with increased variability brought on by climate change give a sense of how such empirical work might be structured.

Beyond general change, the two most likely sources of rapid change within a basin are unilateral development in the absence of institutional arrangements, and the potential for basins within international boundaries to "internationalize." These indicators allow us to monitor for "red flags" or markers which may suggest new basins at risk as they arise.

Tenders for Future Projects

As mentioned above, major water projects such as dams or diversions *in the absence* of agreements mitigating the transboundary impacts of these projects are the most likely settings for conflict. So, how to monitor for such settings? The best sources for cutting through the rhetoric and wishful thinking inherent in public pronouncements of development projects are the public calls for project tenders. Tenders are not put out until project funding has been ascertained, so countries must be fairly certain that a project will actually be developed. They still can give three to five years lead time (more for large projects) before impact will be felt in neighboring countries—enough time to exercise preventive diplomacy. Good print and web sources for water development tenders include Global Water Intelligence, the Global Water Report, and H2Bid, as well as more general lists of development tenders, such as dgMarket.

Weighed against these tenders should be whether the basin has the institutional capacity to mitigate the impacts of major construction. The Transboundary Freshwater Dispute Database includes listings of all freshwater treaties and river basin organizations (RBOs), broken out by Basin-Country Units and coded for a variety of parameters.

Countries with Active Nationalist Movements

If internationalizing a basin provides a setting of potential dispute, one might monitor the world's nationalist movements and ethnic conflicts and, if one wanted to act proactively, one could assess the potential impacts of a successful drive for independence. One could then map those countries around the world with active nationalist movements drawing from two sources: (1) Armed Self-Determination Conflicts, as identified by Ted Gurr's Minorities at Risk Project, at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management (http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/); and (2) Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisations (UNPO). Participation in UNPO is open to all nations and peoples who are inadequately represented as such at the United Nations and who declare adherence to UNPO's Charter. Since these principles espouse non-violence, the conflict level associated with many of these movements is lower. Data on unrepresented nations and peoples can be drawn from the UNPO website (http://www.unpo.org/).

Almost all human and ecosystem activity relies on a safe, stable supply of water resources. Since the resource needs to be allocated to its myriad uses, from drinking to agriculture to instream flows to transportation, industry, and spiritual transformation, water management *is* conflict management. There are 276 basins which cross the political boundaries of two or more countries, covering almost half the globe. While the potential for paralyzing disputes is especially high in these basins, history shows that water can catalyze dialogue and cooperation, even between especially contentious countries that share a river. Moreover, as we move from thinking about rights to thinking in terms of equitably sharing "baskets" of benefits, the opportunities of cooperation become palpable. Evidence suggests that the likelihood of political tensions is related to the relationship between rates of variability or change within a basin and the institutional capacity to absorb that change, often exemplified by treaties or international river basin organizations. Beyond the rational, water also brings out the need to incorporate the transcendent in dialogue in order to balance our approach to the intricate relationship between people and their natural resources.

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Chapter 13

Approaching Study of Political Culture in Afghanistan with Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Frameworks

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On a Working Definition and Functions of Political Culture

Interest in understanding the role of culture in politics, hence political cultures, goes back to classical antiquity. In a 1997 review of current literature on politics and culture for the *Annual Reviews of Sociology*, Mabel Berezin suggests that four distinct subareas of research have crystallized. She labeled them as studies of "political culture," "institutions," "political communication and meaning," and "cultural approaches to collective action" (Berezin, 1997, p. 361). Richard W. Wilson (2000), however, has remarked that "the debate about political culture is an old one, yet at the same time it is in its infancy" (p. 273).

While there seems to be a broad agreement among social scientists on the analytical value of the concept of political culture, there are nevertheless concerns about its applicability to some type of societies (e.g., communist systems; see Brown & Gray, 1977), as well as about how the concept should be defined and "operationalized." Therefore, for our purposes in this paper, it is important to articulate a working definition and a clear understanding of the functions of political culture.

I will start with Lucian W. Pye (1968), who has offered one of the more inclusive and useful definitions of political culture: "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system" (p. 218). Larry Diamond (1993) refines it by adding that political culture refers to "a people's *predominant* beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of its country, and *the role of the self in that system*" (p. 7-8). For our purposes here, I would like to draw attention to the following points:

1. Political culture encompasses both the political ideals and operating norms of a polity, i.e., it provides a "model of" as well as a "model for" political reality (Geertz, 1973, p. 93-94).

2. It is employed instrumentally for the management of public affairs within a society.

3. It encompasses both the collective history of a political system and the life histories of the members (both power elites and their subjects) of that political system.[32]

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[32] By *political system*, I mean "the network of political institutions and the pattern of political behavior within a given state" (Brown & Gray, 1997, p. 3). In this conception, continuity or change in a political system is highly contingent on its political culture.

4. It is the reflection and manifestation equally of public events and private experiences of the political elite as well as the ordinary citizen/subject.

Therefore, political culture is inclusive of such commonly used concepts as political ideology and national ethos or spirit. It encompasses the fundamental values of a political community or society. The signal importance of the concept of political culture for us is "to apply an essentially behavioral form of analysis to the study of such traditional problems as political ideology, legitimacy, sovereignty, nationhood, and the rule of law" (Pye, 1968, p. 219) and to address problems associated with their use and abuse (for a theoretical analysis of the concept, see Verba in Pye & Verba, 1965, p. 512-560).

Following a detailed assessment of a number of recent approaches to the study of political culture, Richard W. Wilson (2000) bemoans their shortcomings and suggests that an adequate definition and theory of political culture must do at least the following four things:

1. Specify the functional role of political culture while maintaining analytical distinctions between social and psychological components as variables

2. Explain how and why people make choices that affect political life

3. Specify the nature of interactions between political norms and performance and show how socialization, moral discourse, and activism link the normative and the performative (practice) sides/levels, and how and why discourses developed in one level have an effect on the other.

4. Specify the sociological context in which a hypothesis can be tested (p. 273).

To accomplish this significant intellectual challenge, Wilson advocates focusing on linking the norms of a political culture with preference orientations in decision-making: e.g., the impact of kinship or patronage norms on making political appointments. Since linkage implies a reciprocal relationship, any theory of linkage must explain how individual or collective preferences act upon culture and, conversely, how normative prescriptions affect individual choices" (Wilson, 2000, p. 268). Wilson argues that since most social exchanges and communications relevant to political culture are moral in nature, the focus of theorizing should be on moral linkages. He then suggests four avenues for conducting such research. First, use a combination of research methodologies (e.g., surveys, historical and participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc.) to learn about normative principles and their moral force for members of society, both individually and collectively. Second, focus on "institutions" as conceived by Douglas North (1981), as "a set of rules, compliance procedures, and moral and ethical norms designed to constrain the behavior of individuals [or offer them opportunities] in the interest of maximizing the wealth or utility of principles" (pp. 201-02). Such a formulation, Wilson asserts, allows political culture to be conceptualized as "moral and ethical behavioral norms," which both undergird rules and how they may be enforced (2000, pp. 201-02). Since rights and obligations are defined and honored in culturally specific contexts, change within a political system is both possible and expected. Third, it is important to ground preference orientations within the framework of "moral development theory [from Piaget], and rational choice theory" (p. 271), since political culture cannot be based on moral preferences alone (see also Fearon & Laitin, 1996). This is because, depending on the stages of moral development, individuals make rational

calculations on whether or not to abide by moral rules. Finally, Wilson draws attention to promising developments in the field of evolutionary psychology concerning the role played by genetics in explaining reciprocal altruism (as opposed to presuming it is rooted in moral values of justice and fairness alone).

These are indeed very useful suggestions for serious interdisciplinary researchers aiming to unpack the complex place of political culture in contemporary sociocultural systems. Wilson's suggestion that the focus of theorizing be on moral linkages within a political culture shaping and being shaped by individual and collective preference orientations is admirable. However, he fails to offer a coherent framework for how to proceed in this important endeavor. I believe the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and Social-Ecological System (SES) frameworks developed at Indiana University's Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis could offer a very useful means of formulating more effective and useful theories of political culture. It is to a brief discussion of IAD and SES frameworks and their possible utility in studying Afghanistan dysfunctional political culture that we turn next.[33]

Background of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and the Social-Ecological System (SES) Frameworks

Professor Elinor Ostrom, the only female Nobel Laureate in economics (2009) and co-director of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis (henceforward the Workshop) at Indiana University, Bloomington, in collaboration with her husband, Professor Vincent Ostrom, and many other scholars at the Workshop, began work on the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework in the early 1980s (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982). This led to the development of the Social-Ecological System (SES) framework (E. Ostrom, 2007a & 2009; for its history, see McGinnis, 2010). In a syllabus for a graduate seminar entitled "Institutional Analysis and Development: Micro," Ostrom (2011) outlined the central concern of the seminar on the IAD framework by highlighting the following questions:

1. How can *fallible* human beings achieve and sustain self-governing ways of life and self-governing entities as well as sustain ecological systems at multiple scales? When we state that institutions facilitate or discourage effective problem-solving and innovations, what do we mean by institutions and what factors affect these processes?

2. How do we develop better frameworks and theories to understand behavior that has structure and outcomes at multiple scales (e.g., household use of electricity affecting household budget and health as well as community infrastructure and investment and regional, national and global structures and outcomes)?

3. How can institutional analysis be applied to diverse policy issues, including urban public goods, water and forestry resources and health care [or appropriate governance system in war ravaged multi-ethnic post-Taliban Afghanistan]? (p. 1)

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[33] I gratefully acknowledge the help of my two very able graduate assistants in this effort: Mr. Mustafa Jushkun in researching some of the sources, and Ms. Aynur Onur for preparing Figure 3 for this paper.

The IAD framework traces its origins to a general systems approach to social policy processes (McGinnis, 2011). Policy-oriented researchers have focused more on the political agenda of domestic, national and even local governing bodies "without recognizing the importance of the local for the global. Instead of studying how individuals are crafting institutions, many scholars are focusing on how to understand national and global phenomena" (E. Ostrom, 2011, p. 2). Ostrom argues that in order to understand the problems of self-governance, we should focus on the "four I's": individuals, incentives, institutions, and inquiry.

The centrality of focusing on *individuals* and the *incentives* they face is critical to understanding of processes at any level of organizations, asserts Ostrom (2011). "When we talk about 'THE' government doing X or Y, there are individuals who hold positions in a variety of situations within 'THE' government" (p. 1) Hence it is important to understand how individuals approach decision-making in a variety of situation with the constraints and incentives they face. The main source of incentives, especially in the public sector, is the rules of the game the participants are playing. *Institutions*, one of the key subjects of study for Ostrom, are defined as "the rules that specify what may, must or must not be done in situations that are linked together to make a polity, a society, an economy, and their inter-linkages. To understand this process, we must be engaged in an *inquiry* that will never end." (p. 1; also see E. Ostrom, 1986, 2007b, 2010).

The settings and issues we study are always complex, diverse, multilayered, multi-scaled, and dynamic, and in need of frameworks that provide a general language and range of theories and models for studying them. Ostrom is adamant that it is impossible to develop a universal theory of actions and outcomes in all settings and for all times (2007a). Therefore, the task of inquiry has to be a lifelong endeavor on the part of investigators, since the tasks of citizens and their governing officials are continuous and unending. Because no sociocultural system can last very long without shared and enforced rules relying on varying degrees of force or potential use of violence, Ostrom bemoans that "we face a Faustian bargain in designing any system of governance" (2011, p. 2).

Michael McGinnis (2011), a co-director of the Workshop at Indiana University, and a longtime collaborator of the Ostroms, offers the following useful definitions for institutional analysis, development, design and diagnosis: "*Institutions* are human-constructed constraints or opportunities within which individual choices take place and which shape the consequences of their choices" (p. 170). A*nalysis*, he says, involves unpacking "institutional contexts into their component parts as a prelude to understanding how these parts affect each other and how institutions shape outcomes" (p. 170). By *development* in the IAD framework he means "dynamic changes of institutions as well as changes in their effect over time" (p. 170). It is also assumed that "*design* is part of the development processes through which institutions are established, maintained, and transformed" (p. 170).

The epistemological and ontological foundations of IAD are said to be grounded in "*political theory* [which] encompasses all efforts to understand the institutional foundation for governance, especially involving efforts to relate philosophical [and religious] principles and normative values to practical challenges of implementing these principles and values in real-

world political institutions" (p. 170; V. Ostrom, 2008). The IAD approach also insists on clear distinctions among three closely related concepts of the "Framework-Theory-Model":

> *Framework* identifies, categorizes, and organizes those factors deemed most relevant to understanding some phenomena. *Theory* posits general causal relationships among some subset of these variables or categories of factors, designating some types of factors as especially important and others as less critical for explanatory purposes. *Model* specifies the specific functional relationships among particular variables or indicators that are hypothesized to operate in some well-defined set of conditions. (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170)

The IAD framework also subscribes to *behavioral rational choice*, which "incorporates effects of visual and verbal cues, norms of reciprocity and fairness and willingness to sanction violators" (p. 170). Individuals are also assumed to be operating under the rules of *"bounded rationality,"* i.e., they pursue their goals under the constraints of "limited cognitive and information processing capability, [and] incomplete information" as well as subtle influences of cultural predisposition and beliefs (p. 170). Fallible individuals are also assumed to be *adaptive learners*. They learn from their mistakes, but these learning processes do not operate perfectly. More important, since institutions are human constructs, institutional analysis must also be part of a "creative process through which the image or artistic vision of an artisan can be imperfectly realized in the real world" (p. 171; V. Ostrom, 1980). Furthermore, institutional process is a collective enterprise, and the role of entrepreneurial individuals "who offer appealing new visions or innovative practical solutions to governance problems" must be given special attention (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170-71).

In the IAD framework, *governance* is defined as "the repertoire of rules, norms, and strategies that guides behavior within a given realm where policy interactions are formed, applied, interpreted and reformed" (McGinnis, 2011, p. 171). It can take a variety of forms, including *community self-governance*, in which members can actively participate in decisions relating to the management of public affairs; *monocentric governance,* ideally conceptualized as unitary sovereignty such as that articulated by Hobbes in *The Leviathan*—such governments do not exist in the real world, though some concentrate considerable power in the hands of a small number of people at the national level; and *polycentric/collaborative governance* with overlapping jurisdictions. Authority limitations are negotiated or assigned to various levels of governing units, including physical boundaries and political jurisdiction over subjects. Typically, polycentric systems are *multi-level* (local, provincial, regional, national, or global), and *multi-type,* as in traditional federalism with nested jurisdictions, or specialized, as in cross-jurisdictional units of special districts. Polycentric systems can be also *multi-sectorial* (public, private, voluntary, community-based, etc.) and *multifunctional,* incorporating specialized units for specific tasks such as provision, production/co-production, financing (taxes, donations), coordination, supervision, or dispute resolution (pp. 271-72).

Elinor Ostrom (2010) isolates the basic components of the IAD framework to consist of the following key elements:

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- *Inputs* or contextual factors, which include biophysical conditions, attributes of the community and rules-in-use;

- *The Action Situation*, considered as the "black box" where choices are made based on interactions;

- *Outcomes* shaped by outputs of the action situation that may be modified by the exogenous variables;

- *Continuous evaluations* of actions, outputs, and outcomes by participants, which may have their own impact on any stage of the dynamic processes; and

- *Feedback and adaptive learning*, which may affect the action situation during the process (see Figure 1).
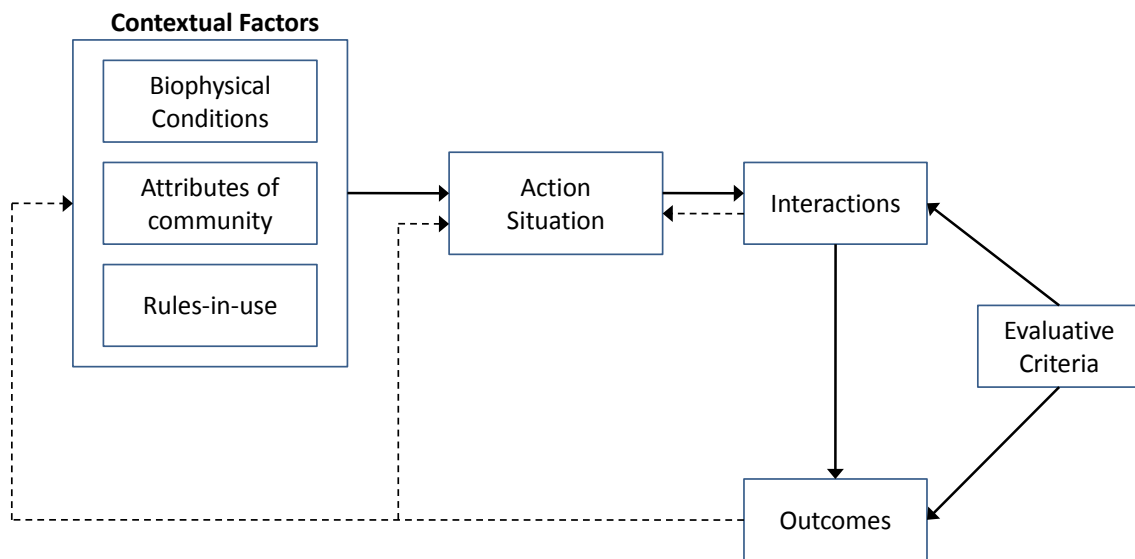
Figure 1. **Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework: Contextual factors, action situation, interactions, outcomes, evaluations, and feedback (Aligica & Boettke, 2009; McGinnis, 2011; Ostrom 1990, 2005, 2011).**

After decades of collaborative effort refining the IAD framework for the study of common pool resource and their governance, the Workshop initiated a new Program for Institutional Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems (PIASES or SES) framework. The SES is a revised version of the IAD framework in which a large number of variables identified by researchers as potentially relevant to the understanding of patterns of interaction between human groups and their environment (physical, social, and cultural) are arranged "in a nested series of tiers, using a set of generic categories intended to be applicable to [the study of] diverse resource sectors, geographic regions, political entities, and cultural traditions [including political cultures]" (McGinnis, 2011, p. 181). Ostrom (2009) states that "SES is composed of multiple

subsystems and internal variables within these subsystems at multiple levels analogous to organisms composed of organs of tissues, tissues of cells, cells of proteins, etc." (Ostrom, 2009, p. 419). Designed collaboratively by ecologists and social scientists for the promotion of interdisciplinary research through the creation of a common language of scientific discourse, the aim of SES is to show "how to dissect and harness complexity, rather than eliminate it from such system" (p. 419). Therefore, the SES framework provides a "common, classificatory framework . . . to facilitate multidisciplinary efforts towards a better understanding of complex SESs" (Ostrom, 2009, p. 419).

The value of the SES framework for this study of Afghanistan's political culture is that it helps "to identify relevant variables for studying a single focal SES [i.e., the role of political culture within the Afghan political system]" (Ostrom 2009, p. 420). More important, it could also help identify "a common set of variables for organizing studies of similar SESs" (Ostrom, 2009, p. 420; see Figure 2). Such a framework would be useful in providing a common set of relevant variables with their subcomponents (see Figure 3). These in turn could be used in designing data collection instruments, conducting fieldwork, and evaluating the appropriateness of policies and practices of nation-building and democratization by international entities across the globe.

Studying Afghanistan's Dysfunctional Political Culture Using IAD and SES Frameworks

Created during the late nineteenth century as a buffer nation-state by colonial powers, namely British India and Tsarist Russia, Afghanistan is a relatively poor and landlocked country in a troubled neighborhood. The country has had an ineffective and inappropriate governance system (although not necessarily a weak one, as is often alleged) during much of its history. By the second half of the twentieth century, popular discontent against the ruling monarchy facilitated the intervention of foreign forces. This led to the Soviet military intervention (December 1979) and ultimately to the complete collapse of the Afghan state in 1992. The militarily victorious Afghan resistance (the Mujahideen) were aided and abetted by many Western countries and Muslim nations in their anti-communist struggles (1978–1992). However, instead of leading to the formation of their promised revolutionary Islamic government, the victorious holy war quickly degenerated into the formation of a Taliban terrorist state (1994–2001). The Taliban provided Al Qaeda terrorists a safe place in Afghanistan to use as a launching pad against the interests of the United States and Europe, culminating in the dastardly acts of September 11, 2001, in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.
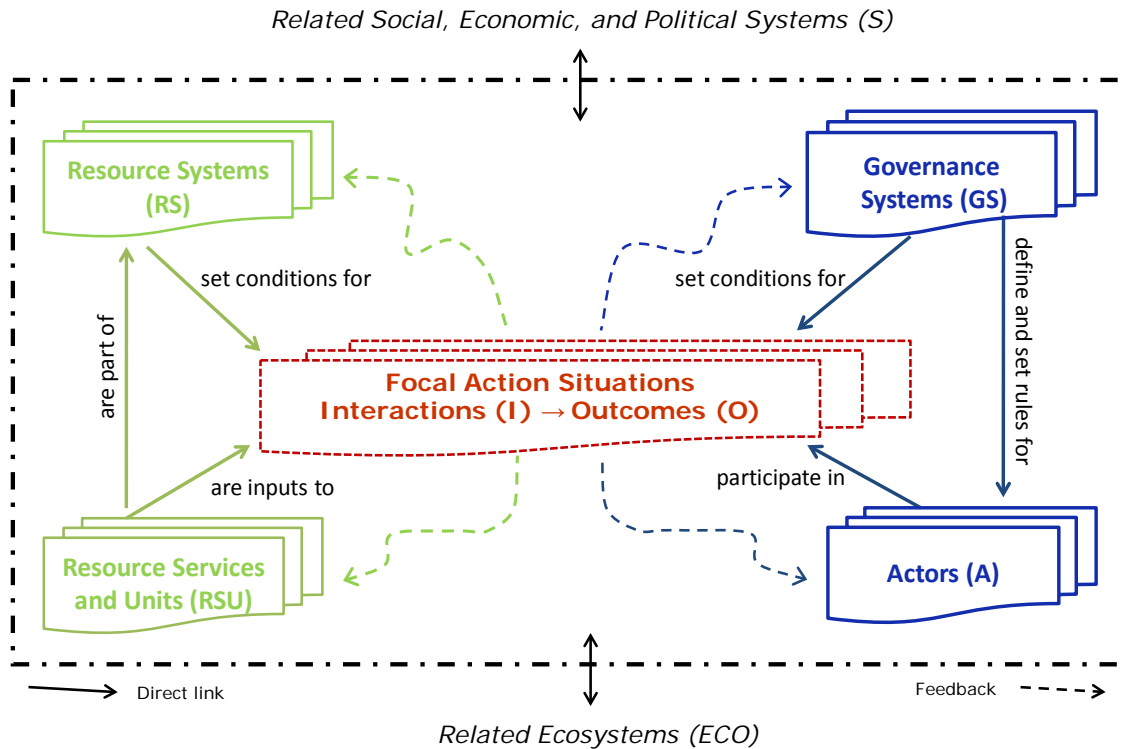
Related Social, Economic, and Political Systems (S)

Resource Systems
(RS)

Governance
Systems (GS)

set conditions for

set conditions for

are part of

define and set rules for

Focal Action Situations
Interactions (I) → Outcomes (O)

are inputs to

participate in

Resource Services
and Units (RSU)

Actors (A)

Direct link ———→   Feedback - - - →

Related Ecosystems (ECO)

Figure 2. **Revised SES Framework with multiple first-tier components (E. Ostrom, 2007b).**

The 9/11 terrorist attacks led to the massive U.S. and NATO military intervention which removed the Taliban from power, but failed during the last decade to secure Afghanistan by building a credible and effective governance system in this multi-ethnic and largely tribal war-ravaged society. The key questions for us to explore are: Despite considerable effort during the past decade, why have both the Afghan ruling elite and their international patrons failed to help build a viable governance system in post-Taliban Afghanistan? How can the resurgence of the Taliban be explained in spite of considerable U.S. and NATO military surges against them, especially during the past several years? Responses to these questions have been many and varied. Attempts by various policy experts to offer explanations, however, have not systematically made use of effective research frameworks to formulate theories and suggest culturally appropriate governance models (for a review of some, see Shahrani, 2002, 2009).

The experiences of state collapse, war, violence, and failure to build an effective governance system in multi-ethnic post-colonial nations are not unique to Afghanistan. Rather, they are common. For the most part, state-building efforts and their degree of success in the Third World have been assessed by political scientists on the basis of a generic Western model of a modern nation-state with powerful security forces able to maintain relative peace and stability regardless of costs to those societies. There is a need to apply more appropriate analytical approaches, such as IAD and SES frameworks, to formulate adequate theories and explanatory models for the continued instability, war, and violence in most of these post-colonial states. This

is a brief attempt to explore the utility of IAD and SES models in studying the role of the dysfunctional political culture of Afghanistan as a possible factor inhibiting the establishment of an effective and appropriate governance system. Because of time and space limitations the discussion will be focused on four key elements of Afghanistan's political culture (see Figure 3) and the effects of their subsidiary parts within Afghanistan's political system.
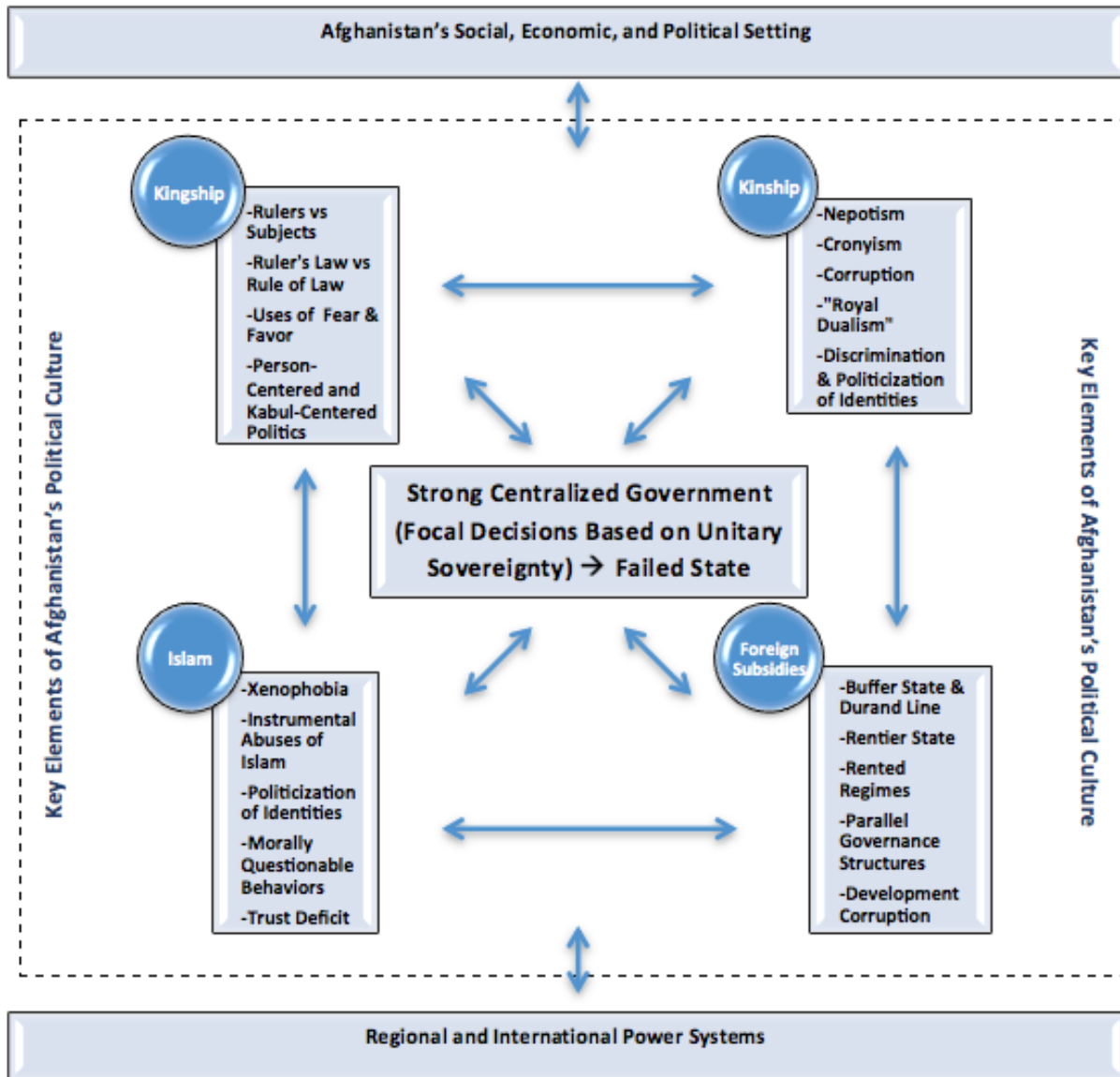

Figure 3. **SES dynamics of the consequences of monocentric, unitary sovereignty-based government decisions rendering Afghanistan's political culture dysfunctional and state failure.**

The IAD and SES frameworks require us to "identify, categorize and organize those factors deemed most relevant to the understanding of some phenomena" (McGinnis, 2011, p. 170), in our case the mutual impact of monocenteric governance on Afghanistan's political culture. Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, I argue that political dynamics in Afghanistan generally, and especially those of the ruling circles, have been shaped by the closely connected ideals and practices of four key institutions. They are: *kingship* (monarchic/monocentric sovereignty); *kinship* (familism, clanishness/tribalism), and among the Pashtun adherence to the accompanying values of *pashtunwali* (the Pashtun code of male honor); *Islam* (a universally acknowledged source of moral codes and guidance); and the *political economy of state dependency* on foreign subsidies or assistance.

Lucian Pye (1965) reminds us, "The notion of political culture assumes that the attitudes, sentiments, and cognitions that inform and govern political behavior in any society are not just random congeries but represent coherent patterns which fit together and are mutually reinforcing" (p. 7) It is not, however, assumed that all social groups share or utilize equally the elements of political culture, and that the elites hold a distinctive place in these dynamics. In addition, "ethnic and regional group cultures, classes, military and bureaucracy and the university [may] hold varying values and political cultures" (p. 8). Pye also notes that differences of basic cultural values within a society sometimes may be greater than between nations. Laitin (1986) states that political culture may best be thought of as forms of strategic resources, or what he terms:

> "Points of concern" embedded in the dominant cultural subsystem. Political elites in any society will act strategically and ideologically in the hope of defining and delimiting which strands of their society's culture should become dominant. Those who are successful in establishing a dominant cultural framework form a 'hegemonic bloc.' The dominant cultural subsystem, once chosen, spins political life into a 'web of significance' which grasps elites and masses alike. Since the hegemonic bloc is more concerned with the efficiency of control than the secondary consequence of having altered the cultural framework for action, the new elites will themselves become (often unwilling) subjects of their own past cultural choices. In this way, cultural subsystems have an impact on the subsequent choices of both elites and masses. Consequently, social science needs to develop theories capable of isolating this power of culture to influence politics. (p. 171)

The ideals and practices of these four elements of Afghanistan's political culture, formed over a century of violence-ridden, oppressive, tribalized dynastic rule, have consistently and dialectically affected choices and decisions of rulers and subjects alike. The ultimate wish of the rulers from the very start has been to build a strong centralized state structure by means of modern arms and financial subsidies/aid provided by foreign colonial and post-colonial patrons. This was accomplished by terrorizing, subjugating, and trying to homogenize the diverse populations of Afghanistan.[34] Therefore, proper attention to understanding myriad disturbing

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[34] The list of major patrons since 1880 includes British India, which laid the foundations for "modern" Afghanistan as a buffer state and remained the main patron of Afghan rulers until after World War II. This was followed by patronage by the U.S. and former USSR during the Cold War, culminating in the Soviet occupation of the country during the 1980. Then Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, India, Russia and Iran fought proxy wars during the 1990s (Tanin, 1996). Finally, consider the current U.S. and coalition partners' installation of the Karzai regime in 2001.

historical legacies of Afghanistan's dysfunctional political culture and their uses for affective and instrumental purposes by the power elites, is critical to the current U.S. and international community's efforts to end the cycle of violence in Afghanistan.

As Edward Said (2003) suggested, "the writing of history is the royal road to the definition of a country" (p. 77). It will be argued here that the uses and abuses of these four closely linked key institutions of Afghanistan's political culture are, at least in part, responsible for hindering considerations of alternative paths to effective and appropriate governance in the country. Close adherence to the hegemonic values of these dysfunctional institutions has led elements of the current ruling elites, as well as their resurgent Taliban adversaries, to hang onto them. We turn now to a brief discussion of the impact of each of the four key components of Afghanistan's political culture. These components are critical to understanding the dynamics of Afghanistan's sociocultural system.

Kingship (The Institution of Monocenteric Monarchic Sovereignty)

Afghan (Pashtun)[35] monarchs, beginning with Amir Abdur Rahman (ruled 1880–1901) and his son and successor Amir Habibullah (r. 1901–1919), claimed the sources of their sovereignty directly from God. King Amanullah (r. 1919–1929) attributed his claim to the Afghan throne to the will of the "honorable nation of Afghanistan" for "putting the crown of the Kingdom" on his head (Ghubar, 1967, p. 752; Shahrani, 1986, p. 45).[36] His successor, Nader Shah (r. 1929–1933), credited "the exclusive help of the Almighty God" and "the sacrifices of the peoples of Afghanistan" (Gregorian, 1969, p. 322). King Amanullah, the failed reformist ruler, introduced constitutionalism as another important source of his sovereignty/legitimacy, and this became the standard for all of his successors to the throne, as well as after the fall of the monarchy (see Shahrani, 1986). In practice, sovereignty was exercised whenever possible by means of a relatively large army, gendarmerie in rural areas, and police in the cities and towns. All of these consumed the meager resources of the state, whose coffers were generally supplemented by foreign subsidies.[37] Another significant vehicle to centralization of power was the creation of an extensive system of corrupt Shari'a courts (Ghani, 1983, 1978; Kakar, 1979). On the whole, the Afghan rulers did not trust their subjects, and lived for the most part in mutual fear of each other.

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[35] Afghanistan's rulers, with minor exceptions, have since 1747 come from among the Kandahari Durrani Afghan or Pashtun tribesmen.

[36] Amanullah created and institutionalized the now infamous Loya Jergah (Grand Assembly) of selected dignitaries (religious and otherwise, rural and urban) and government officials for the purpose of anointing him as the sovereign (King/Shah). This new "traditional Afghan" institution of political culture has been justified by dubiously constructed precedents dating back to the founder of the Durrani Pashtun Empire (1747–1772). Amanullah's successors have all abused Loya Jergah as a means to claim their sovereign powers, with all its limitations (see Shahrani,1986).

[37] It is important to note that large-standing armies in Afghanistan are notorious for being used as instruments of oppression by rulers against their own subjects or as means of staging coup d'états to topple governments. As such, they are sources of political instability and a hindrance to democratic governance, rather than promoters of national security, as is often presumed.

The most significant legacy of the institution of kingship is a claim to exclusive rights of personal sovereignty over their subjects by the rulers.[38] This problematic claim to exclusive rights of sovereign rule by members of one ethno-tribal community over all the rest has turned into a virtual demand by the Pashtun elites to such an entitlement. The justification offered for this demand has been twofold: the Pashtun rulers were the founders of the modern state of Afghanistan (in 1747 and again in 1880 and 1929). In addition, the rulers claim the Pashtun constitute a demographic majority without a census ever having been taken (Ahady, 1995; Starr, 2001b, 2004). The most important expression of the rights of sovereignty, other than how violently the rulers have dealt with their political opponent (real or imagined), is the right to appoint, promote, demote, and dismiss all government officials from the cabinet ministers to the lowest of local administrators within a centralized system of rule. Completely ignoring legal pluralism of the country (shari'a, 'adat or local customary practices, etc.), their claims of sovereignty in essence have amounted to the "rulers' law" rather than "the rule of law." That is, the peoples of Afghanistan have been ruled as subjects (not as citizens) to be controlled and extracted from, with extremely few rights. The institution of kingship has also promoted person-centered and Kabul-centered politics with serious negative consequences for center-periphery relations (see Shahrani, in press). In practice, the exercise of sovereign rights has been strongly affected by the next important component of Afghanistan's political culture—kinship—to which we now turn.

Kinship (Familism, Clanishness, and Tribalism)

The most significant social organizational principle at the local level and at the higher levels of *qawm (*clan, tribe, ethnic group, etc.) in national politics in Afghanistan is based on patrilineal descent reckoning and patriarchal authority. Kinship has been an important but problematic factor in the history of dynasties and post-dynastic politics. Within Pashtun ruling families, kinship relations based on the common practice of polygyny by rulers have been a constant source of tension leading to serious and sometimes bloody crises of succession to power. Such conflicts have also been aggravated by the ideals and practices of *tarborwali*, an aspect of the Pashtun code of male honor/chivalry (*Pashtunwali/Pakhtunwali*) that promotes intense competition among paternal first male cousins, often resulting in violence and vendettas.[39] At the higher level (beyond the extended family), the same principles are the cause of considerable hidden and not-so-hidden rivalries for access to outside money and weapons between members of extended families, lineages, clans, and tribal formations, especially among the Pashtun (e.g., Durrani vs. Ghilzai).[40]

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[38] This has been true whether it is a monarch or president (interim, transitional, or elected, as in the case of Karzai), or even Burhanuddin Rabbani (head of the Mujahiddeen government, 1992–1996/2001) or Amir Mullah Muhammad Omar (in the case of the Taliban).

[39] This phenomenon, which Amin Saikal (2006) has called "Royal Dualism," was at least in part responsible for the downfall of the Musahiban Dynasty at the hand of Muhammad Daoud Khan. It is actually, so far, very poorly studied. On the dynamics of the rules of Pakhtunwali and their impact on Pashtun behavior and society, see Akbar Ahmed (1980).

[40] These are the two major Pashtun tribes: the Durranis have provided the royal households since 1747 and inhabit for the most part the well-watered Helmand-Arghandab river valleys in southwestern Afghanistan, while the rival Ghilzai faction occupies the more marginal, drier hills of eastern and southern Afghanistan.

At the level of state operations, preference for appointment of kinsmen in government posts has become the principal cause of nepotism and cronyism. Because of the pervasiveness of such preferences in political appointments, kin-based and ethnic identities have become the bases for the creation of social hierarchies. For example, with the ruling household at the apex of power and prestige, followed by other members of Durrani and then Ghilzai Pashtun tribes, the Hazarahs until very recently were considered at the bottom of the pecking order, while all other non-Pashtun ethnic groups took their places in between, in a rank order depending on the context. As a result of past practices, politicization of tribal, ethnic, and regional identities has increasingly occupied a central place during decades of war and conflict in national politics. Indeed, identity politics continue to be the principal cause of nepotism in the appointment of government officials (by every ethnic group), as well as in allocation of state and/or outside resources to individuals, communities, and regions by state officials.[41]

Paradoxically, in this highly politicized environment of personal and collective kin-based identities, especially during the past century among ruling elites, kin-based groupings at the local level have helped maintain the most durable and resilient communities of trust in the rural villages, nomadic camps, and even urban neighborhoods (*mahalla* and *guzars*). These kin-based communities of trust, operating through informal local *shuras* (councils of elders), resolve disputes (over property and other claims) and can be used to defend and protect their own localities in times of crises. As such they are the most precious social capital the country offers for building a firm state structure.

Islam (The Source of Moral Codes and Guidance)

The centrality of Islam in Afghanistan's political culture and national politics, especially its use legitimating rulers' claim to state power and authority and as the principal means of mobilizing political and military action against domestic and foreign foes, is well documented (Edwards, 1993, 1995; Maley, 1998; Marsden, 1998; Naby, 1988; Nawid, 1999; Olesen, 1995; Roy, 1983; Shahrani & Canfield, 1984; Wilber, 1952). The uses of Islam in Afghanistan's politics, in addition to politicization of communal identities (especially between Sunni and Shi'a, rural and urban, Islamist and secular nationalist, communist and Muslim traditionalist, etc.), have intensified tremendously in recent decades. These unfortunate realities of societal change, however, are often not properly understood or acknowledged by the secularized Afghan expatriates returning from the West (or their foreign patrons) who are currently ruling the country. Many of the collaborating elites constitute the new technocratic rulers of the post-Taliban Afghanistan. They did not directly experience the jihad resistance during the 1980s and its aftermath during the 1990s, either inside the country or in the refugee environments of Pakistan and Iran. They are ill informed about the profound intensification of Islamic awareness from the growing jihadi culture among the masses, brought about through a prolonged exposure to the more conservative teachings of the Deobandi and Saudi-Wahhabi teachers and preachers,

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[41] Some even argue that the international patrons have also become "tribalized" in Afghanistan by virtue of their choice of places of service in different parts of the country. Over the years I have noticed that members of the international community serving in Afghanistan often express ethnic/tribal preferences based on their experience among the various ethno-linguistic groups within the country. Allocation of resources by different coalition members along ethnic-regional coordinates within Afghanistan has also been rather uneven, resulting in charges of discrimination or disregard toward non-Pashtun and more peaceful parts of the country.

especially among the Pashtun communities in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country close to Pakistan border areas.[42] The overwhelming support of these Pashtun communities for the Taliban movement in the 1990s and their support for the current resurgence of the Taliban is a powerful testament to the changed Islamic preferences of the ordinary Pashtun tribesman today.

The post-Taliban leaders of Afghanistan (Pashtun and non-Pashtun alike), especially those who have returned from years of exile in the West, have tried systematically to abuse, marginalize, co-opt or eliminate the Mujahideen leaders (good and bad alike) by labeling them as "warlords," often with the blessings and help of their international patrons in the media and even some scholars.[43] Their presumed success in co-opting, restraining, eliminating, or sidelining the Mujahideen and other local and regional leaders could be at their own peril. The ordinary people of Afghanistan, especially at the local community level, have a fairly sophisticated assessment of their own local and regional leaders (Mujahideen and otherwise). Contrary to media claims, the locals do not live in constant fear of the great majority of the so-called "warlords."

However, given improved means of communications,[44] hypocritical attempts to deceive the presumed illiterate, hence "ignorant" Afghan masses by their post-Taliban Western-trained technocratic and professional rulers who claim to adhere to basic Islamic values of decency, honesty, fairness, and justice are no longer successful. One example is the now celebrated case of the sacked former attorney general, Abdul Jabbar Sabit. He had noisily declared jihad on corruption while in office. Now he is accused not only of being corrupt himself, but has been caught on videotape in a state of intoxication "dancing giddy around a room and slurring his words" (Filkins, 2009).

The relationship of the ordinary people of Afghanistan to Islam has been entirely devotional. Islam has been the sole source of guidance for managing their personal and collective lives and assessing the character of their rulers. In contrast, the relationship of their rulers with Islam has been almost purely instrumental and generally ambivalent or negative, including during the post-1980s jihad and the Taliban era. Indeed, these uses and abuses of Islam by the ruling elites have been one of the main causes of the lack of trust and often silent and sometimes militant opposition to the government, especially during the last three decades. The increasing trust deficit in the post-Taliban regime headed by President Hamid Karzai (who is incidentally regarded highly for his personal piety) over the last several years has gradually widened, lending some reluctant popular support to the Taliban extremists, especially among the Pashtun. Failure to devise appropriate means to bridge this trust gap between the secularized ruling elites and highly conservative Muslim society will only accelerate the impending disaster that is brewing.

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[42] It is important to remember that over 85% of more than 3.2 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan were Pashtun, and that a great many of them lived in the FATA region.

[43] For example, see Ahmad Rashid (2001, 2008), Jalali (2009), and S. Frederick Starr (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d).

[44] There are now some 17 million cell phones (some of them with video capabilities), many private television channels, numerous radio stations, and a thriving print media in Afghanistan.

Political Economy of State Dependency on Foreign Patrons

The Durrani Empire (1747-1793), predecessor to the modern state of Afghanistan in the 1880s, was built on the war economy of armies led by ambitious men to the Indian subcontinent for booty to pay their tribal *lashkar* (militia) and collect taxes and tribute from conquered lands for the state treasury. This possibility for funding the Durrani state came to a quick end by the turn of the nineteenth century when Britain took control of Hindustan (India) in the southeast and the Russians began to press down south into Turkistan in the north.

The new possibility offered by British India, the European colonial superpower, to those aspiring to rule in Afghanistan, especially after their 1879 invasion, was modern weapons and substantial cash subsidies. However, these came with a hefty price tag that has haunted successive rulers of the country since Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1880–1901) accepted the offer. The price asked for and granted was the acceptance of the Durand Line as the official frontier with British India and relinquishing control of foreign policy of the new buffer state of Afghanistan to the Viceroy of British India, though this control was reclaimed by his grandson, King Amanullah, in 1919. The historic capitulation by Amir Abdur Rahman (the alleged founder of "modern" Afghanistan) amounted not only to relinquishing the richest and most fertile territories occupied by the eastern Afghan (Pashtun) tribes, but also to dividing the Pashtun homelands into what came to be known as the NWFP within British India, and since 1947 has been part of Pakistan. The non-recognition of the Durand Line since the creation of Pakistan by successive rulers of Afghanistan has become one of the major sources of tension between the two countries, and arguably one of the main causes of political instability, especially during the last three decades. It has also contributed to the current Taliban insurgency (Qassem, 2007).

The installation and/or maintenance of all heads of state in Afghanistan since "Iron" Amir Abdur Rahman in 1880, either directly or indirectly, has been managed by outside powers. The only exception to this rule was King Amanullah (and his nemesis, the Tajik ruler Amir Habibullah II, who ousted him during a civil war), who apparently refused the support of the former USSR (in 1929) to reclaim his throne, as was reported by the late poet laureate of Afghanistan, Ustad Khalillah Khalili (Tanin, 1996).

It was not easy, however, for the rulers to accept substantial arms and cash from potential and actual foreign enemies of Afghanistan in order to keep their untrustworthy subjects under control, because doing so often forced them to engage in xenophobic Islamo-nationalist discourses against their foreign patrons, making relationships full of double talk and divided loyalties.[45] This problem may have been less complicated when they had a single foreign master (British India), as was the case from 1880 to the end of World War II. With the termination of the "Great Game" and the onset of the Cold War, finding patrons in a bifurcated world required a great deal of skill at begging and even more skill keeping the balance from tipping in favor of one side or the other. An incident of tipping the balance, as happened with President Muhammad

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[45] President Karzai is now faced with this predicament, especially after every tragic incident of non-combatant death following attacks by the United States and coalition forces against Taliban suspects in the villages close to Pakistan border. Karzai attempts to echo the increasingly common popular protests to such senseless killings of the innocent by criticizing his major patron, the United States of America.

Daoud (r. 1973–1978), cost him not only his life and the lives of 17 members of his immediate family, but eventually also the loss of the country to occupation by the former Soviet Union (Tanin, 1996).

Following the onset of the jihad resistance against the Khalq-Parcham regimes (1978–1992), however, the role of foreign subsidies and international military and humanitarian assistance became extremely complex. In the pre-war era the central government received the largesse (in arms and/or cash) and disbursed it with a minimal degree of international oversight. The government in Kabul had some control and oversight over larger development projects which required the presence of foreign personnel. With the formation of multiple resistance organizations outside the country (largely controlled by Pakistani and Iranian security) and the arrival of numerous international entities—Muslim and non-Muslim, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (UN), and others—Afghan society became fair game for all who expressed interest. Gradually, numerous chains of multiple dependencies stretched from the villages of rural Afghanistan all over the globe via Peshawar for weapons, cash, medicine, teachers, doctors, and more, not only to fight the Soviet occupation but also to survive conditions of war and deep insecurity. Paradoxically, this collapse of central authority had very positive consequences for local communities across the country. It gave them the opportunity to create effective local organizational structures and leadership not only for fighting the war of liberation but also for meeting, with help from international NGOs, the basic medical, agricultural, educational, judiciary, and security needs of their communities. These community-based organizations with leadership at the local and regional levels are still the most valuable assets produced during the prolonged years of war. If the post-Taliban government had tried to reform, institutionalize, incorporate and strengthen them—instead of attempting to destroy and weaken them—the country would not be facing its current environment of security crises and lack of confidence in the government and its international patrons.

Unfortunately, lack of proper political vision and appropriate planning for the governance of a war-shattered, multi-ethnic society in post-Taliban Afghanistan has produced at least four parallel governments operating in the country: the U.S. Embassy and military; the UN and its ISAF-NATO forces; International NGOs, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Bank with their own private securities; and weakest of them all, the Karzai government.[46] There are also countless other entities in the capital, the provinces, and the districts that are doing what a properly conceived, effective post-Taliban Afghan government should be doing. For example, many private security firms are owned and operated by people of influence in Kabul and the provinces. Indeed, some former jihadi commanders (deserving the title of "warlord") with close ties to the post-Taliban government, as well as close relatives and clients of the new rulers (perhaps new warlords in the making), have formed private security firms serving foreign entities. Also, many national NGOs owned by high government officials or their relatives and cronies have been created and are engaged in graft through pyramid schemes pretending to do reconstruction projects and more.

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[46] The first three have territorial claims to parts of the country, and have their own much larger budgets, armies, and police. Most of them also have extremely expensive private security. Each operates independently on the basis of rules and regulations of its own. As such they are not subject to the laws of Afghanistan and pay little heed to the occasional demands of the utterly dependent Karzai government.

Conclusion

The monocentric political system of Afghanistan, proven inappropriate and ineffective, is a manifestation of key institutions of its political culture, as well as its sustainer. Like religions, as Max Weber suggests, all political cultures "are historical individualities of a highly complex nature . . . they exhaust only a few of the possible combinations [of elements] that could conceivably be formed from the very numerous individual factors to be considered in such a historical combination" (Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 292). The IAD and SES frameworks facilitate identifying, defining, and underscoring those features in the total picture of Afghanistan's sociocultural system which have been decisive for the fashioning of the country's historical political system and political culture. These approaches also highlight how and why particular elements of Afghanistan's political culture—kingship, kinship, Islam, and political economy of state dependency on foreign subsidies—are employed by what Weber calls "socially decisive strata" or "master strata" (p. 276), depending on the changing political ecology of the larger colonial and post-colonial world system during the past century.

What is clear from our discussion in this paper, however, is that Afghanistan's political system is not determined by any one of its four key institutions of political culture. Rather, the choices and decisions made by members of the Afghan power elites desiring to build a strong centralized government in specific times and places are effected by strategic deployment of one or more of these closely related factors in the management of power relations in the country. Application of IAD and SES frameworks in this brief study demonstrates how the repeated uses and abuses of key elements of Afghanistan's political culture, produced and reproduced during more than a century of failed attempts to build a strong centralized and often tribalized nation-state in a multi-ethnic Afghanistan, gives Afghanistan's political culture its distinctive dynamics and outcome. Indeed, I argue here that the principle reason for the failure of the U.S. and NATO forces to bring peace and stability in post-Taliban Afghanistan is the insistence by the current squabbling Pashtun (Afghan) elites—both within the Karzai regime, as well as their Taliban nemeses—to re-establish the same old hegemonic centralized governmental system by relying on the use of the same traditional, dysfunctional political cultural norms—i.e., kingship, kinship, and purely instrumental abuses of Islam—under auspices of the U.S. and ISAF forces.

The predicament facing the United States and her international partners in dealing with collaborating Afghan elites within the complexities of political ecology of Afghanistan's socio-cultural system, as indicated earlier in this paper, is neither new nor unique. The institutions of kingship, kinship, and Islam have deep historical roots in the political cultures of large parts of Asia, Middle East and Africa. However, these traditional elements of local political culture have been rendered dysfunctional by the colonial imposition of modern centralizing nation-state system accompanied by the crippling dependencies on outside patronage. The outcomes of modern state building efforts in post-Colonial Asia and Africa, especially in Muslim societies, have been for the most part volatile to say the least. The IAD and SES frameworks, if applied to the study of such societies, can add considerably to our understanding of these complex sociocultural systems. That is, these frameworks will encourage theorizing on how key elements of political cultures are causally connected as deployed by the ruling elites. The application of IAD and SES frameworks in this very brief study of Afghanistan's political culture also urges us

to ponder questions such as: what are the fundamental assumptions underlying the policies of state- or nation-building in post-Taliban Afghanistan (and other fragile and failing states in the region and beyond) that have brought the country once again to the brink of another disaster, and what might be the way out?

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Chapter 14

The Danger of "Culture" and the Value of Sociocultural Systems:
Helping Forcibly Displaced Populations Move toward Stability

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Forcibly displaced populations (FDPs) include refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers, and stateless individuals. Together, they are often referred to by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as *persons of concern*. Exact numbers are unknown; there likely are at least 25 million worldwide. They are created by political turmoil and war, natural disasters, and—less often—disease pandemics and industrial accidents. Political pressure and/or oppression are key to their creation. Passing through pre-flight, flight, and—in some cases—post-flight/resettlement stages, such persons are regularly encountered by military personnel in conflictive and post-conflictive environments.

This chapter has four purposes, framed by my 40 years' work as a field anthropologist:

1. To provide useful information about FDPs, especially refugees, to military personnel, particularly those without extensive experience in this regard.
2. To illustrate how understandings of socio-cultural systems can be applied to such populations.
3. To indicate how notions of "culture" are frequently misunderstood and misapplied, to the detriment of external change agents and local populations.
4. To show how new and nuanced understandings of "culture" can effectively be used to probe the intricacies of societal structure and function.

With each of the above, pragmatic moves toward culturally sensitized and culturally sensible FDP stabilization in conflictive and post-conflictive environments are sought.

The term *sociocultural system* has come to serve us better than the terms *culture* or *cultural traits*. This derives, in large part, from the work of interdisciplinary systems thinkers who are adept at considering processes and interconnections. As vulnerable populations are considered, systems factors can be identified. Sociocultural factors include those associated with breakdowns in default values (Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1), leadership issues, religious problems (including those associated with social and cult movements), and cross-ethnic clashes. When disruptive, these are sometimes referred to as cultural stressors. While culturally attuned, these factors do not simply represent "cultural traits."

To assist forcibly displaced populations, it is important to know "things cultural." Yet the term *culture* is dangerous in the ways it has been reified, and essentially useless in some of the

ways it has been interpreted during the past century. This chapter explores these pitfalls and proposes ways in which better understandings of greater value to Soldiers can be made. As displaced, traumatized groups are considered, from a sociocultural systems perspective, the foci should include understanding formal and informal support networks, clan and lineage relations, cultural narratives of success and failure, sub-rosa communication channels, and localized decision-making processes. Cultural stressors (like tense intra-clan relations) can effectively be identified. Culturally attuned adaptive strategies (like elder-facilitated councils) can be implemented. In working with persons under duress, culture is best understood by outside change agents not as a list of traits or cultural variables (Corman, Chapter 6), but through the interpretation of leadership opportunities, family dynamics, power differentials, sociopolitical networks, dominant and emergent institutions, and resource acquisition strategies.

Special and innovative uses of cultural constructs related to forcibly displaced persons include *culture of terror, culture of violence* (i.e., structural violence), *culture of impunity, oppositional subculture,* and the more ubiquitous *political culture*. The first two are covered in this chapter. These "cultures" represent purposeful systems, following Gharajedaghi (Chapter 1).

For personnel working with FDPs, it is critically important to know what works. I provide case-specific examples from my fieldwork in Bosnia, Timor-Leste, El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Sudan. It should be noted that since 2000 the major regions with the most refugees in flux/in transit have been the Middle East, South-central Asia, East/Northeast Africa, the Great Lakes region of Africa, and parts of Southeast Asia. The Americas and the Caribbean have generated relatively small numbers of refugees, although several hundred thousand left El Salvador for the U.S. earlier, during the 1980s. Several thousand Haitians, euphemistically termed *entrants* by U.S. officials, fled Haiti for the U.S. during roughly that same period. For both practical and legal purposes, none of the Mexicans who enter the U.S. are considered refugees. They are considered to have been motivated by economic or familial, not political, factors. Owing to military and paramilitary/guerrilla operations, large numbers of IDPs have been generated in Colombia since 1990. U.S. military advisors have assisted some of them. As many as 50,000 are estimated to have fled to Ecuador as refugees in recent years (World Refugee Survey, 2009).

Background to the Modern Refugee Crises

Worldwide, the so-called "modern refugee crises" have occurred since World War II to the present. Most are associated with complex humanitarian emergencies (CHEs), i.e., politically charged and severely disruptive events involving multiple actors, multiple victims, and (usually) intra- or international warfare. Resource management is always a major challenge in such events. Morbidity and mortality are excessive. Military personnel often are involved in the event's creation, management, and/or resolution. Natural disasters are less frequently associated with CHEs, although drought and associated major famines—which by definition have political components—are included. An understanding of CHEs and the ways in which systems-attuned analysts interpret them *in situ* leads to the crafting of the humanitarian space (Figure 1), comprised of events, exemplars, foundations, and teams in dynamic interaction. This relates to points made later in this chapter, and more broadly, to the development of civil societies which include the contributions of FDPs.

Figure 1. **The humanitarian space.**
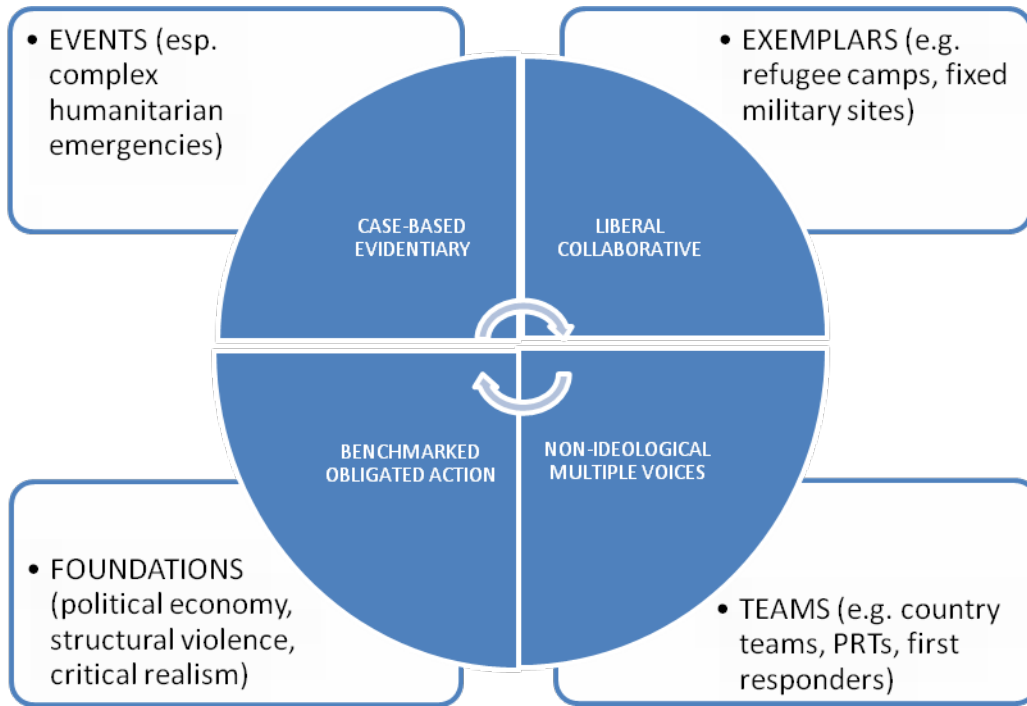
THE HUMANITARIAN SPACE

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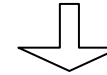
CRAFTED BY SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, MILITARY PERSONNEL, POLICY SPECIALISTS, NGO STAFFERS, EMERGENCY RESPONDERS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

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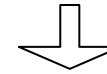
MOVED BY SUFFERING AND COMPASSION

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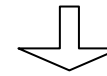
WORKING TOWARD ENHANCED CIVIL SOCIETIES WHICH INCLUDE REFUGEES

Within the circle:

- CASE-BASED EVIDENTIARY
- LIBERAL COLLABORATIVE
- BENCHMARKED OBLIGATED ACTION
- NON-IDEOLOGICAL MULTIPLE VOICES

- EVENTS (esp. complex humanitarian emergencies)
- EXEMPLARS (e.g. refugee camps, fixed military sites)
- FOUNDATIONS (political economy, structural violence, critical realism)
- TEAMS (e.g. country teams, PRTs, first responders)

Immediately post-World War II, events in the Middle East (especially the creation of Israel) and Europe (especially the repatriation of central and eastern Europeans displaced during the war) played prominent roles in shaping the system along legal/human rights and service/resettlement dimensions. A refugee regime, with definable transnational guidelines and methods of operation, began developing.

Within the United States, the era of modern refugee crises began more recently. It was ushered in during May of 1975, with the fall of Saigon, as the war with Vietnam came to a close. Southeast Asia became a benchmark as refugees flowed out of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Those chancing dangerous ocean trips in often-overcrowded craft, embarking in the South China Sea, became known as *boat people*. Over one million were resettled within the U.S. during the next few years, at a peak rate of over 100,000 annually (CRIIC, 2011). Among the most well-known were the Hmong, members of a large hill tribe from Laos. Many had fought alongside U.S. troops in Southeast Asia. Current U.S. refugee policy, although it has been "tweaked" here and there, can be dated to innovations during the 1975–1985 period.

Worldwide, several prominent refugee-producing regions can be identified. In addition to Southeast Asia, these include SW Asia (especially Iraq and Afghanistan), Palestine, the Great Lakes Region of Africa, the Horn of Africa, and West Africa. Recently, Nepalese and Burmese refugees have been arriving in the U.S. in relatively large numbers. The so-called "Arab Spring" of 2011 produced several hundred thousand Libyan, Tunisian, Egyptian, and Syrian refugees and IDPs. Among the most challenging in recent years, assistance-wise, have been the few hundred North Koreans who managed to escape.

Looking back, refugees, asylum-seekers, and sanctuary-seekers have been known since early Biblical times. Cities of refuge dating to at least the tenth century BCE were created to aid those seeking sanctuary in the Middle East (Rabben, 2011). Among the most famous refugees were proto-Israeli populations forced from areas near Jerusalem to Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in the sixth century BCE. However, the term *refugees* per se seems first to have been used with the Huguenots, a Protestant minority fleeing oppressive circumstances in Europe in the seventeenth century (Marfleet, 2006, p. 64). Subsequent wars involving emergent European nation-states produced refugees and IDPs (although the latter term was not used explicitly), but it was not until World War I that larger numbers of forcibly displaced populations were recognized as needy "classes" or "categories." Shortly thereafter, the Nansen Commission was founded to systematically assist certain war refugees, from Germany to Armenia; it soon became an arm of the League of Nations (Van Arsdale, 2006).

The most well-known and largest refugee agency is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, established in 1951), now with offices in over 120 countries.[47] In a sense, it grew from the Nansen Commission's accomplishments. The Hungarian

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[47] The 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees actually went a long way to moving people's thinking from "what is a refugee's culture?" to "what are the political pressures a refugee confronts?" Still used today, with slight modification in 1967, it states (as paraphrased) that anyone is a refugee who—owing to fear of persecution owing to nationality, religion, or social/political stance—finds him/herself outside their state-of-origin and who—owing to this fear—is unwilling or unable to use that state's protection. The criteria are political, not economic. The convention goes on to lay out the obligations and rights of refugees, as well as the obligations of states towards them. It sets out international standards for their treatment, and embodies principles in the areas of

crisis of 1956, with thousands of refugees fleeing to Austria, was the first CHE to systematically engage the UNHCR. The UNHCR's first significant non-European involvement occurred in 1957, with Chinese refugees fleeing to Hong Kong (Cutts, Loughna, & Nicholson, 2000, p. 35). The early 1960s saw the organization's first substantive work in Africa as decolonization was beginning (p. 37). By 1970, two thirds of its program funding was being devoted to Africa (Marfleet, 2006, p. 150).

Among the most well-known Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) dealing with refugees and other forcibly displaced persons are the International Organization for Migration (IOM, established in 1951), the International Rescue Committee (IRC, established in 1933), Refugees International (RI, established in 1979), and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI, established in 1911). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, established in 1863 and the progenitor of the original Geneva Conventions) deals with refugees and IDPs in the context of its range of responses to the ramifications of natural disaster and warfare. The U.S. military engages refugee issues, irregularly and as the need arises, through the above-named organizations and more formally through certain United States Agency for International Development (USAID) programs, the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and ambassadorial country teams. To engage issues effectively, an understanding of the organizational culture of each partner agency is important.

Currently, among the most well-known refugee camps are Dadaab, NE Kenya (hosting Somalis); Kakuma, NW Kenya (hosting Sudanese and Somalis); Umpiem Mai, Thailand (hosting Burmese); and Deheishe, West Bank (hosting Palestinians). Prominent camp corridors, where large numbers of camps parallel troubled national boundaries, have emerged during the past 30 years; these corridors include the Bangladesh/Indian border (accommodating Bangladeshis fleeing internal strife); the Afghanistan/Pakistan border (accommodating Afghans fleeing current fighting); the Myanmar/Thailand border (accommodating Burmese fleeing an oppressive government); the Palestine/Israel "internal" border (accommodating long-displaced Palestinians); and the Burundi/Rwanda/Congo borders (accommodating members of several ethnic groups). Sometimes corridors of a different type are established, as humanitarian relief routes are implemented and secured within a conflict zone. This was seen in Lebanon during the 2006 crisis.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, publishers of the annual *World Refugee Survey*, reported in 2009 that among the worst places for refugees, consistently, are Kenya, Malaysia, and Thailand. This illustrates the challenge of politics trumping service, since these countries also have relatively sophisticated refugee support networks. Each country has been accused of culturally insensitive practices, adverse cultural stereotyping, and racist assistance policies. Among the best places for refugees, service- and human rights-wise, have

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education, employment, residency/housing, access to courts, freedom of movement, naturalization, and security against *refoulement*, i.e., forcible return (Cutts, Loughna, & Nicholson, 2000). The 1967 U.N. Refugee Protocol and 1969 Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention expanded the conceptual mandate, with the latter particularly important as the implications of foreign aggression, occupation, and domination were considered. The need for refugee non-rejection at the frontier and voluntary repatriation, when home circumstances permitted, were clarified.

been Costa Rica, Brazil, and Ecuador. However, these countries receive relatively few refugee arrivals compared with countries outside the Americas. Among the countries currently hosting the largest numbers of refugees are the U.S., Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Thailand, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Kenya.

Cultural Issues, Sensible Alternatives

As stressed in the introduction, "culture" is a highly problematized term. It is more often misused than used appropriately. Dozens of definitions have been offered since the late nineteenth century; as summarized by Haviland (2002) they have run the gamut from "human behavior [originating] in the use of symbols" to "[processes] transmitted from one generation to the next, [the members being] enculturated" to "humanity's 'social heredity'" (pp. 40-42). Several early anthropologists simply provided lists of characteristics. Some of these definitions, as foundational to full-blown research investigations, have led to hurtful stereotyping of people. In my opinion the famous work of anthropologist Ruth Benedict (*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 1946), as "Japanese culture" was analyzed for U.S. military and civilian specialists, epitomizes this problem. Some current anthropologists, such as Roberto González (2009), believe that the military's Human Terrain System perpetuates some of these same culture-analytic problems, with occasional damage done to indigenous people when "their cultural data" are used—and even subverted—by deployed military personnel.

As Cuzzort and King (1989) have cogently noted: "Culture is not simply a knowledge of [certain relevant things]. It includes the profane as well as the sublime, the secular as well as the sacred. . . . We learn and we share certain conceptions about how we should behave" (p. 202-203). In dealing with forcibly displaced populations, a knowledge of "how we should behave," both as members of our own society and as specialists trying to help members of another society, is one key to stabilization. An understanding of nuanced relationships is another key. An understanding of *processes* that unfold, particularly as decisions are made and resources are allocated, is the most important key. These understandings can help us avoid the reification of culture, i.e., the homogenizing of it, the broad stereotyping of its members, and the placing of it on a metaphorical pedestal to be unidimensionally worshipped or vilified. Some of the analyses of the recent refugee and IDP situation in Darfur, Sudan, provide stark examples. An analyst's rote listing of the primary cultural characteristics of Darfur's tribes is virtually worthless; it provides no insights into what these mean in the context of dynamic sociocultural systems. By way of contrast, an analyst's focus on the resource acquisition strategies of nomadic versus sedentary tribes within Darfur is worthwhile (Van Arsdale, 2006).

Traditionally, attitudes have been seen to shape behaviors. More systemically and more recently, behaviors are seen to shape attitudes. The process is interactive. Attitudes are enculturated (as people are raised and socialized within their society) and acculturated (re-shaped, should they move—as refugees do—from one society to another). An amalgam of societal experience, tradition, and "big event" history shapes the way a people's "culture" is perceived and presented by them to outsiders. Central narratives emerge, as Perez (2011) and Corman (2012) have noted. Major historical figures (such as Franklin Roosevelt) and major historical events (such as the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor) are featured. The astute military analyst will recognize nuances in the way that indigenous attitudes shape indigenous

interpretations of events, often reflected in sweeping narratives. The analyst will seek such narratives, as Derrin Smith did when he was working in Afghanistan in 2004/2005. He interviewed the mayor of Tarin Kowt and was able to identify a poppy cultivation narrative that related to Afghan-perceived economic necessities. The pressures being placed on local growers by Pakistani businessmen emerged as critical. Smith's non-judgmental interpretations led to clearer cross-cultural understandings as U.S. military personnel engaged the local populace through Provincial Reconstruction Teams, moving them toward non-poppy crops (Van Arsdale & Smith, 2010).

Indigenous attitudes also frame individual decisions. Choices are made as individuals "manipulate the system" to achieve intended, self-interested outcomes. A society's members pick and choose among "cultural alternatives" when clear-cut gains can be identified. In Timor-Leste in 2007, I interviewed men living in an IDP camp in the capital, Dili. They had been displaced, with thousands of others, through dramatic and conflictive events of the prior year. With a combination of U.N.-coordinated and NGO-sponsored programs, their small camp had been provided several necessities. Most important was a pipe that brought in plenty of fresh water, a truck that delivered adequate amounts of food, and ready access to a well-supplied school nearby. Counter-intuitively, family members who had not been displaced from the countryside were deemed by these men as "disadvantaged" because they had fewer services and less food. Strategically, these men, building on existing extended family networks, devised a plan whereby family members were surreptitiously rotated into the camp for a period, to benefit, and then rotated out again. By focusing on adaptive processes rather than "culture," I identified this creative Timorese strategy.

Strategies for Engaging Sociocultural Interpretations

Work which I am involved in as an applied field anthropologist, along with colleagues representing Project Education Sudan (Baker, Gai, Harris, & Shippy, 2011) and LIONS—the Leadership Institute Of New Sudan—provides insight into some of the sociocultural factors being engaged by refugees, IDPs, and other residents of the world's newest country, the Republic of South Sudan. Fundamentally, we are attempting to understand how leadership works. What are Sudanese "best practices"? What kinds of sociocultural processes do outside change agents need to be aware of? How can an environment that facilitates empowerment, including that of IDPs (especially women), be created?

Leadership among the Dinka

There are several well-known tribal groups resident within South Sudan. Among these are the Dinka. These cattle-herders/farmers make decisions through fiat, negotiation, and collegial—often long-winded—discourse. When confronted with a major problem, they prefer negotiation to come to a solution. It appears that most solutions, including about issues such as land use, are "standard/traditional," and not what outsiders would term innovative or social action-oriented. They reflect what is termed a *dominant institution* (Glenzer, Chapter 17), in this case one attuned to cultural problem-solving. Outsiders' opinions are rarely solicited, but are not rejected out-of-hand (see discussion of *cieng*, below). Formal and informal leaders both exist, with the former clearly recognized and the latter known but less-clearly recognized by outsiders.

Both types of leader play important roles. In a land dispute a formal leader (usually an elder) would lead the discussion with a formal leader from the opposing lineage. An informal leader (sometimes a younger man) might work behind the scenes to elicit support from citizens who are on the fence, particularly refugees just returning to their homeland. To state it differently, the communications that drive the bargain are *on the surface* and those that cement the deal are *sub-rosa* (below the surface or behind the scenes).

The use of indigenous councils is well known to the Dinka. However, it appears that the use of "teams" as reflecting an *emergent institution* (as defined by NGOs, military advisors, and ambassadorial staffs, and implied by Glenzer, Chapter 17) is not so well known. Under the ministerial and parliamentary auspices of the new Republic of South Sudan, community outreach teams will be developing. Reconfigured social action is intended. It is certain that both surface and sub-surface communications, as well as both formal and informal leaders, will have to be cultivated. Cases of land fraud and cattle disputes likely will be the first exemplars (i.e., major analytic targets) tackled by such teams. Cases involving military encroachment on civilian affairs, with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army featured, likely will be the second exemplars for this new type of institution.

Leadership, in any society, is reflected in the style of decision-making and negotiation used. Leadership is "an influence process," as Army Leadership Doctrine stresses (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). In South Sudan, it is best reflected in the handling of land/boundary use, cattle trading, and marriage arrangements. Men are in charge. Dinka men's leadership roles are more formalized and "easier" to recognize; they currently are less fluid than women's. Women's leadership roles are less formalized and "harder" to recognize; they currently are more fluid than men's. New opportunities are emerging within local educational systems, such as those in villages where Project Education Sudan works.

The Dinka term *cieng* must be understood (Deal, 2010). This is the complex notion of social unity, of "being in the community." It has the strength of a moral obligation, as Smith (Chapter 2) might say. But it is more: it means that key decisions, even if rationally correct and clearly advantageous resource-wise, should not be made by a single person. They must involve consultation with tribal leaders. In some cases the "decision data" must be put out for wide-ranging discussion by all interested tribal members. This includes well-intended programming possibilities being put forth by outside change agents and advisors. Returning refugees and IDPs must re-engage *cieng*; lessons learned while away cannot be incorporated locally unless this process takes place.

As I worked with both formal and informal leaders in late 2010, through the LIONS organization, one of my assigned tasks was the discussion of human rights in cultural context. I found that couching the discussion in terms of "cattle rights" worked well. Cattle are central to South Sudanese sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical orientations, with their transfer being essential to marriage and other transactions. "What's good for a cow is good for a person," as one man said.

Justice among the Dinka

Marriage negotiations, more than the marriages themselves, serve as a window into social network development, intra-ethnic relations, resource acquisition strategies, and violence. With the Dinka, the challenge of arranging a marriage can be great. Jeffery Deal (2010) reports on the process as suitors are engaged, competition begins, tensions escalate, and justice (recast by some as retribution) is meted out. Ill-fated negotiations can lead to violence. Misunderstandings can lead to violence. Resources (especially cattle) inadequately gauged and/or transferred can lead to violence.

In one instance typical of others, Deal (2010) reports that justice was harshly enacted. A potential suitor, a tall man, was killed by members of another clan. While the two murderers were captured and imprisoned, members of the victim's clan nonetheless were concerned about justice through "replacement killings." Tall men are highly esteemed, and so even in death revenge must metaphorically be meted out—meter by meter. It would take two deaths of shorter men to atone for the death of a single taller man. The adage "an eye for an eye" is transmogrified among Dinka to "a tall man for a tall man, a single short man will not do." The non-astute outside observer might conclude that "marriage can be violent" and that "Dinka justice and retribution are inappropriately aligned." The astute outside observer would conclude that marriage is about resources, sociopolitical clan relations, and balance-in-competition. Even a refugee, returning from abroad with considerable wealth, cannot alter this equation.

This discussion of violence leads to consideration of a very different type, the aptly termed *culture of violence*. That described for the Dinka is not insidious or oppressive in the same way as that described in the next section.

A Culture of Terror

An appropriate analytic use of the term "culture" is as a construct. I have found that useful manifestations include *culture of violence* and, especially, *culture of terror*. These can be related to the powerful theoretical premises associated with structural violence, as insidious systems of oppression are institutionalized and maintained by governments. Already-marginalized people suffer worst. Structural violence is not always accompanied by brazen acts of physical violence.

More and more, forcibly displaced persons have become victims of cultures of terror, as Marfleet (2006) stresses. These cultures are rarely instigated by terrorists. They are primarily developed by states, not networks of fanatics, as real or imagined "threats from below" are considered. Assassinations, pogroms, death threats, torture by proxy, and vigilantism are some of the methods employed. Mass displacement often results.

I encountered the ramifications of a culture of terror in Ethiopia (Van Arsdale, 2006). During the late 1970s and 1980s, this nation was listed as one of the most problematic states in a U.N.-compiled list of states engaging in torture, disappearances, and summary executions. Having arrested and later killing Emperor Haile Selassie, Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam had

assumed full control of the country by late 1976. Symbolic and actual ties to the so-called "Soviet Reds" led to his nickname, the "Red Negus," and to the brutally oppressive "Red Terror." As his so-called Dergue government implemented a series of land reforms and military policies related to his stated work on behalf of "the public good," Mengistu tightened his grip on political dissent and expressions of ethnic distinction. Vendettas became commonplace. Of cultural importance was the Dergue's support of Amhara nationalism. A group of substantial historical importance, the Amhara position was readjusted and reasserted under Mengistu's pressure. As both dictators and democratically elected leaders would agree, nationalism and ethnicity are negotiable, not static. Ethnic identity itself is fluid when viewed sociopolitically.

The Red Terror lasted from 1976 through 1978. During this period a move was made by the government from arbitrarily oppressive and abusive tactics, to systematically institutionalized oppressive and abusive strategies. Key institutions were "retooled." One initiative emerging a few years thereafter was the infamous "villagization" program (Van Arsdale, 2006). It was conducted by the government in concert with a resettlement program; the parallel efforts were ostensibly related to better resource use nationwide. Over one million IDPs are estimated to have been forcibly displaced by these parallel initiatives. Human rights regarding privacy, privilege, and property were disregarded. Villager choice as to where to move was severely curtailed. Forcible displacement under duress became the unwritten rule. The manipulation of ethnicity to serve political purposes became commonplace. A culture of terror was institutionalized. (Outside change agents, whether Soviet military advisors or NGO representatives, did little to intervene.)

A Tripartite Framework for Stabilization

Within a broad tripartite frame of *assistance, protection, and prevention*, I believe there are five primary processes that both military and civilian personnel involved with FDPs must consider as moves are made toward stabilization in conflictive and post-conflictive environments. These are: (1) relief, (2) aid, (3) reconstruction, (4) rehabilitation, and (5) development. Although there are variations and exceptions, these can be roughly conceptualized on a gradient from the process where less cross-cultural knowledge is necessary to succeed (i.e., relief) to the process where great cross-cultural knowledge is necessary (i.e., development). As these processes are engaged by humanitarians, they reflect what can be termed "refugee commonality of experiences" over and above "refugee cultural differences." Space does not permit a discussion of each of these five, but it is certain that an indigenously empowered development/stabilization environment is ideal, as soon as it can be established.

Access and Stabilization

Officers and enlisted personnel alike often are going to encounter forcibly displaced persons in conflictive and post-conflictive environments. Favorable contact can best be accommodated by Civil Affairs Groups or the recently proposed Diplomatic Expeditionary Field Teams (Van Arsdale & Smith, 2010). In whichever form, these must be comprised of military and civilian personnel, the latter consisting of both skilled American and indigenous people. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2005) suggests that the following principles be taken into account as activities are engaged:

1. Assure participation of the least powerful (or non-dominant) in the process of program planning and analysis, especially regarding situations involving women and children

2. Assess the efficacy of already-existing consultation mechanisms before establishing new processes

3. Pay special attention to societal power relations, including those involving elders, and related cultural behaviors reflected in respect for cultural appropriateness of participation

4. When possible, plan and promote joint initiatives that involve minority organizations

5. Create ownership by the targeted group (p. 32)

Indigenous Experts and Stabilization

Whether encountered in communities or camps (as discussed below), forcibly displaced persons—as with any society—have members who serve in three often-unnamed but extraordinarily important capacities of relevance to civilian and military helpers. These are referred to by anthropologists as *gatekeepers*, *culture brokers*, and (my term) *goalies*. They are cultural experts, liaison specialists, and communication interlocutors. Stabilization cannot be achieved without them.

A gatekeeper is a person who monitors and regulates "cultural flow." In Bosnia, shortly after the civil war (1992–1995) had ended, I met a man who was such a gatekeeper. "Zeitzo" lived in a mini-IDP camp for Serbs and was paid—on an extraordinarily modest basis—to assist with camp food, cleanup, and security activities. Yet he had another, more important, unpaid job. Wearing an ever-radiant smile and greeting IDPs and visitors alike with genuine good cheer, he served informally as a monitor-cum-regulator. While pouring a glass of schnapps, he used his interpersonal skills to speak openly with "those known" and "those not known," and to monitor who could enter the camp and who could not. The camp situation was tense and his skills were needed. He usually could be found sitting near the literal gate, while working the metaphorical gate. No weapon was required.

A culture broker is a person who knows a great deal about a society, its history, and the ways that sociocultural information might need to be interpreted by outsiders. In Ethiopia, shortly after the civil war (1974–1991) had ended, I met such a man. The wealthiest person in a small village in the northern province of Tigray, this farmer knew the extended community extremely well. He knew most of the people who had fled to Sudan as refugees during the war, and most of the people who had been displaced elsewhere within the country as IDPs. When I was there many were streaming back. He could name the heroes and heroines of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, who had battled the central regime successfully. Several had come from his village. For those of us entering as outside change agents, he was a font of information. As we conducted a water reconnaissance project, he advised us on the sociopolitical networks we needed to work with, the socioeconomic constraints we had to be aware of, and the psycho-social attributes of key leaders. At the broadest level, he could recite the meta-narratives that frame

Tigrayan cultural successes and failures through time. At the most specific level, he could advise as to which returning refugees and IDPs would be best to work with on water resource projects.

A goalie is an indigenous person who helps his community achieve a goal in conjunction with outside aid or expertise. In South Sudan, as refugees and IDPs were returning to their homeland in advance of independence (which was officially confirmed on July 9, 2011), I met such a man. Having left Sudan for the United States years before as a refugee, and having gained his U.S. citizenship, he nonetheless was returning to help his people. A member of the Nuer tribal group, he had the classic scarification of his rite of passage to manhood emblazoned on his forehead. His self-defined goal was to return to his village, utilize the business skills he had learned in America, and assist other returning refugees. Keeping a lid on intra-tribal violence was another self-defined goal. His intent was not to return as an outside expert, but rather as a well-informed, everyday citizen.

Vulnerability, the Humanitarian Space, and Stabilization

One of the most useful ways for the astute outside change agent to assist with stabilization processes is to focus on those factors that make FDPs most vulnerable. If provision rights (i.e., water, food, shelter, sanitation) are inadequate, the focus must begin there. While these are universal and trans-cultural at one level, they are culturally attuned at another; the type of corn that members of one society favor is not necessarily the same as the type that members of another favor.

Stabilization requires that extra attention be given to those most vulnerable. This often includes single women. Gender-based violence (GBV) is common in many pre-flight and flight situations, and has cultural correlates. In certain East African societies, the woman—while revered in "the ideal"—is castigated in "the real" if she is victimized by Soldiers or civilians, friends or enemies. The victim is blamed, even in cases of rape. It is said, "She put herself in a compromising environment. She was not accompanied by her brother while traveling. She foolishly went out after dark" (Weinstein, personal communication, 2010).

One way of considering vulnerability is to consider "space," particularly as used in camps (Roy & Al Sayyad, 2005). Just as military personnel think of theaters of operation, those developing refugee and IDP camps think of what I would term *theaters of encampment*. Much the same questions are asked in both instances: What is the nature of the terrain? How can resources be mobilized? How are facilities to be laid out? What incentives and constraints exist to assist those living there? What are the costs and benefits (with a special focus on security) of intervention?

The camp serves as an exemplar (i.e., main analytic target) for the humanitarian space, as Figure 1 indicates. The normal order *de facto* has been suspended; "the camp is the space where the state of emergency, and thus the state of exception, becomes the rule" (p. 156). To the degree that its development is co-structured, by both incoming refugees/IDPs and civilian/military teams, it has a better chance to succeeding. Following the work of Marfleet (2006), Van Arsdale (2006), and to a lesser extent Rabben (2011), six kinds of refugee/IDP camp can be identified:

1. *Containment*, where refugees and IDPs are seen to be "a problem," as in Thailand.

2. *Haven*, where they are seen to be "in constant danger" and in need of special security, as in Sudan.

3. *Supportive service*, where they are seen as "basically self-sufficient" and merely in need of an external boost, as in Bosnia.

4. *Transitory*, where they are "in need of processing" and administrative assistance as they prepare for their next locale, as in Italy.

5. *Permanent*, where they are "in need of infrastructure" and maximal host population acceptance, as in Israel/Palestine.

6. *Rehabilitative service*, where refugees are seen as "damaged psycho-socially" and in need of targeted psycho-educational services, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This sixth category also includes child soldiers who are being rehabilitated. It should be noted that military notions of fixed sites (Van Arsdale & Smith, 2010) can be used in effective point-counterpoint fashion as the effectiveness of permanent refugee camps is considered.

Working with IDPs in both El Salvador and Bosnia, I found that the camp provides an appropriate meeting ground for outsiders intent on helping. The space in each camp is culturally configured, to the extent that resources permit, so that residents can feel like they are developing a home rather than simply a temporary place to live. In a five-acre camp outside San Salvador named El Tránsito Número Tres (i.e., The Transit Place Number Three), which I visited in 1984, Salvadoran IDPs had arranged housing so that all 600 residents lived in close proximity to one another. Their homes were simple 12' x 12' cubicles, linked one to another, in two long rows. What furnishings they had were extraordinarily Spartan. The alignment allowed a majority of the camp space to be used for soccer fields, gardens, administrative offices, and an elementary school. An important cultural insight is that, in arranging the homes so close, the IDPs sacrificed their privacy. They placed greater emphasis on places to play, socialize, garden, study, and meet. Wood, tin, plastic tarps, and cement were the construction materials of choice for all camp structures. Latrines were sited at distances about 100 yards from the nearest dwellings. Some water was trucked in; rainwater running off tin and plastic roofs was collected in barrels. Several Catholic charities, working under the auspices of the United Nations, helped finance the facilities.

In Bosnia, the Serbian IDPs I met in 1997 had moved only about six miles from their original homes in the capital of Sarajevo, but as one man said, "I feel like I've moved six thousand miles." He and his wife had constructed a functional apartment in an unused section of an abandoned warehouse. Three other families had done the same; each had received some NGO assistance (both Serbian and non-Serbian) to get started. It was a kind of mini-camp. Each family had furnished their new framed-wood homes, each about 20' x 20', with cabinets, furniture, kitchen utensils, microwave stoves, beds, portable closets, and TVs. A pipe brought in water; a flush toilet was available nearby. Culturally, a good deal of "individual family space" was preferred. In the other portion of the warehouse, a large IDP feeding center had been established. Bread was trucked in and stored in huge stacks. It was the job of one man just to guard these

provisions. A modern kitchen had been installed; 500 people were fed daily. The head cook earned the equivalent of about US $25 per month.

In both El Salvador and Bosnia, the camps were developed not to keep people in, but rather, to keep visitors out. Residents, using permits, were free to come and go. Outsiders—whether civilian or military, service provider or researcher—had to receive permission to enter. Space was therefore considered not just in terms of *locale*, but in terms of *movement*. It was emically (i.e., indigenously) defined. IDPs were empowered to informally but definitively direct human transit.

In both settings, our meetings with the leaders demonstrated our willingness to talk "on their turf." They chose the places to sit, the beverages to serve, the mode of conversation. By following the culture brokers' leads, we learned that the residents' greatest concern was not unemployment but underemployment.

Conclusion

Forcibly displaced populations sometimes return to their homelands; often they do not. Stabilization involving FDPs involves working with those who do return (or who are repatriated), working with remaining members of their communities who never left, and working with other local residents in a coordinated fashion. In such settings, successful change agents are those who can enact programs which meet felt needs, while maintaining a peaceful environment and promoting positive cross-cultural relations as civil society is created or improved. They must understand the geo-terrain and the human terrain. These change agents, both military and civilian, must understand "the people's culture" (including any nuanced differences in refugee culture) as well as "the organizational cultures" of the agencies supporting the stabilization effort. In doing this, they should not rely on lists of cultural traits or characteristics, but rather upon systemic understandings of sociocultural networks, local decision-making processes, and communication channels (both on-the-surface and sub-rosa). They must be able to analyze what a group of refugees have done *without* coming to simplistic and inappropriate conclusions of cultural cause-and-effect.

By employing a number of case-specific examples, both from my field work and that of other applied social scientists, I have attempted to illustrate *what works* as outside analysts and change agents attempt to characterize the often-displaced people they are helping, then plan and implement stabilizing interventions. Cultural principles have been addressed within the context of sociocultural systems. Features of the refugee regime have been highlighted. It should be added that these analytic approaches also work as encounters with paramilitary groups and militias are considered. The following "cultural questions" often can be answered: How do militias interact with FDPs? How do they recruit, train, and maintain members? Are their organizational structures unusual? Do aspects of their structures mimic standard military structures in the region? Where are their bases of civilian support? How do they engage established relief, aid, and development organizations?

A book of the type which contains the present chapter is one good way to share information on sociocultural systems. Another good way is to follow in the footsteps of

anthropologist Paula Holmes-Eber (2012), a professor at the Marine Corps University. Islam is one of her specialties, as is the Middle East. Before she accepted this position, and having been told that her knowledge was highly valued by military personnel, she asked herself this question: "For if Marines were undertaking many of the tasks of NGOs and other aid organizations, shouldn't they be receiving cultural education to help them better understand and communicate with the people they were assisting?" (p. 133). Through her teaching and research she tries to alleviate cultural misunderstandings and address cultural principles, with curricula developed (by her and others) that emphasize Middle Eastern issues but also, more broadly, leadership, negotiation, ethics, and language study. She places all this under the rubric of *operational culture*.[48]

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Chapter 15

Gender Considerations for Engagements in Afghanistan and Beyond

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Today military actions are diverse, complicated, and ever-changing. U.S. Soldiers are trained warriors, but are also expected to be diplomats, mediators, and humanitarians over numerous consecutive deployments (Odierno, 2012). Success on the battlefield is no longer based on counting the bodies of the defeated, but on winning the trust and confidence of the populace. Of course, this is more easily said than done. When engaging effectively with individuals of a foreign country, there are cultural and social nuances that are not easily acquired or understood. Even with extensive cultural and language training, Soldiers may find it difficult to consider all aspects of the sociocultural environment that could impact mission success.

This macro-level understanding can come only from thoughtful and strategic consideration of the many dynamic and interrelated components of the environment in which military leaders find themselves (i.e., sociocultural systems thinking). Sociocultural systems thinking forces the leader to consider not only the problem at hand, but also the numerous social and cultural variables that impact and are impacted by the problem. "Effective use of these discriminating conceptions requires both a clear understanding of the operating principles of sociocultural systems and unambiguous recognition of the emerging challenge of handling interdependent variables" (Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1, p. 1). Important sociocultural variables identified elsewhere in this anthology include the physical environment, resources of the region, political considerations, war-related factors, and individual biases of perception and thought. Cutting across these elements of a sociocultural system is the significant impact of gender.

For military leaders, understanding how gender fits into the sociocultural system can have a tremendous impact on identifying underlying issues of conflict, productive problem resolutions, and steps to achieve sustainable stability. Understanding the significance of gender on mission success is accomplished at two levels: the interpersonal and the macro. At the interpersonal level, leaders can identify mission-relevant gender issues by engaging directly with males and females of a population to identify their needs, expectations, and grievances. At a higher-order systems level, leaders look across their area of operations to larger groups and incorporate gender considerations in their military strategy and decision making processes. For example, leaders utilizing sociocultural systems thinking and incorporating gender considerations might facilitate stabilization in a conflict region by supporting equality in education, healthcare, and/or human rights for boys and girls. By helping to develop national programs, not just working one-on-one with the population, the U.S. military might reduce the influence of an insurgency over a society by making the population smarter, stronger, and more confident to stand up for its rights. This chapter intends to facilitate discussion about the

importance of gender considerations when working at both the interpersonal and macro levels in complex sociocultural environments for future military operations.

The Role of Gender

Gender is not just about one's biological sex; gender defines a person and how others treat him or her. Gender is an important component of self-identity at an individual level that impacts perceptions of self, expectations about the future, and an individual's place in a greater social environment (Reeves & Baden, 2000). At a broader level, how gender is perceived by a culture, and more importantly, how genders are treated differently says much about a culture.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2011), "The most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent" (p. 27). The better a country effectively utilizes the talent of its people, the more productive and competitive the country becomes in the global environment. Specifically, the report indicates there is "a correlation between gender equality and the level of competitiveness, GDP per capita, and human development" (p. 27). The report identifies several countries and predicts increases in their gross domestic product (GDP) if the gender gap is decreased. The report suggests the gender gap can be reduced by facilitating equal access to education, employment, political participation, health care, and leadership positions for both genders. Reducing the gender gap can result in dramatic gains for a nation. For example, the U.S. would increase its GDP by 9%; the Euro zone by 13%, and Japan by 16%. More impressive potential for growth is in Middle Eastern countries where "…the gender gap in economic opportunity remains the widest in the world" (p. 30).

The Global Gender Gap Report (2011) discusses other benefits of considering gender issues for the improvement of national stability and development. For example, women have been shown to perform well as leaders and representatives of their people. When women are encouraged to participate in decision making activities, they often provide balance and mediate discussions that result in productive solutions. They can be powerful role models to children and are often more focused on health care and education than are men. In addition, women are known to foster economic growth and development in their communities, especially when their male counterparts have been killed, imprisoned, drug addicted, or travel for work (Global Gender Gap Report, 2011; USAID, 2011). A series of *Foreign Policy* articles underscores this perspective by highlighting the roles of women globally and how they facilitate growth in their nations: ". . . promoting the status of women is not just a moral imperative but a strategic one; it's essential to economic prosperity and to global peace and security" (Verveer, 2012, p. 1).

The United Nations' Security Council (2000) viewed gender considerations important in resolving worldwide conflict. In response, the council adopted Resolution 1325, which details steps that will help maintain international security. The resolution focuses on the significant roles women have in peace development and preventing conflict throughout the world. Specific gender issues considered by the UN Security Council are increased participation of women in decision making, implementing protective measures for rights of women and girls, mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout field operations, expanding women's roles in operations throughout the world, and focusing on measures to reduce gender-based violence.

Other countries followed this resolution by developing their own National Action Plans to meet these responsibilities in their own populations.

U.S. Political and Military Actions to Support Gender Considerations

The United States has taken an ambitious stance on promoting women's issues in the world as a strategic step to reducing conflict in vulnerable regions. In December 2011, President Obama signed an executive order detailing the U.S.'s National Action Plan regarding women, peace, and security. Within the statement of policy, the goal of the plan is "to empower half the world's population as equal partners in preventing conflict and building peace in countries threatened and affected by war, violence, and insecurity. Achieving this goal is critical to our national and global security" (Executive Order No. 13595, 76, 2011). To further highlight the U.S.'s dedication to gender issues in future international and military actions, President Obama stated, "Experience shows that true democracy cannot be built without the full and equal participation of half our population. Women's economic empowerment is essential for economic recovery and growth worldwide. Successful transitions in the Middle East and North Africa will depend on women's ability to shape their countries' futures" (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2012).

Specifically for military operations in Afghanistan, the commander of the International Security and Assistance Forces (ISAF) General John Allen stated, "We cannot speak about the future of Afghanistan without talking about half of the Afghan population: Afghan women and the vital role that Afghan women are playing in paving the path toward the bright future that we all seek for this great country" (Kim, 2012). After more than 10 years of fighting in Afghanistan, military leaders now understand more fully that women must be included at all levels of the decision making process and that their participation is critical to sustainable peace for the Afghan nation.

Interestingly, the importance of gender issues in military operations is not new to U.S. strategic thinking. For example, the U.S. Army's Counterinsurgency (COIN) Field Manual states:

> Most insurgent fighters are men. However, in traditional societies, women are hugely influential informing the social networks that insurgents use for support. When women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts. Getting the support of families is a big step toward mobilizing the local populace against the insurgency. Co-opting neutral or friendly women through targeted social and economic programs builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine insurgents. Female counterinsurgents, including interagency people, are required to do this effectively. (2006, p. A-6)

The difficulty is knowing how to implement this knowledge in a complex sociocultural system. The U.S. military has made great strides in facilitating stabilization at a village level, developing projects that reinforce self-sustainment in communities, and building rapport with locals. These are key features of the military's COIN mission (see Figure 1), but the focus is often at the interpersonal level, not at a systems level.
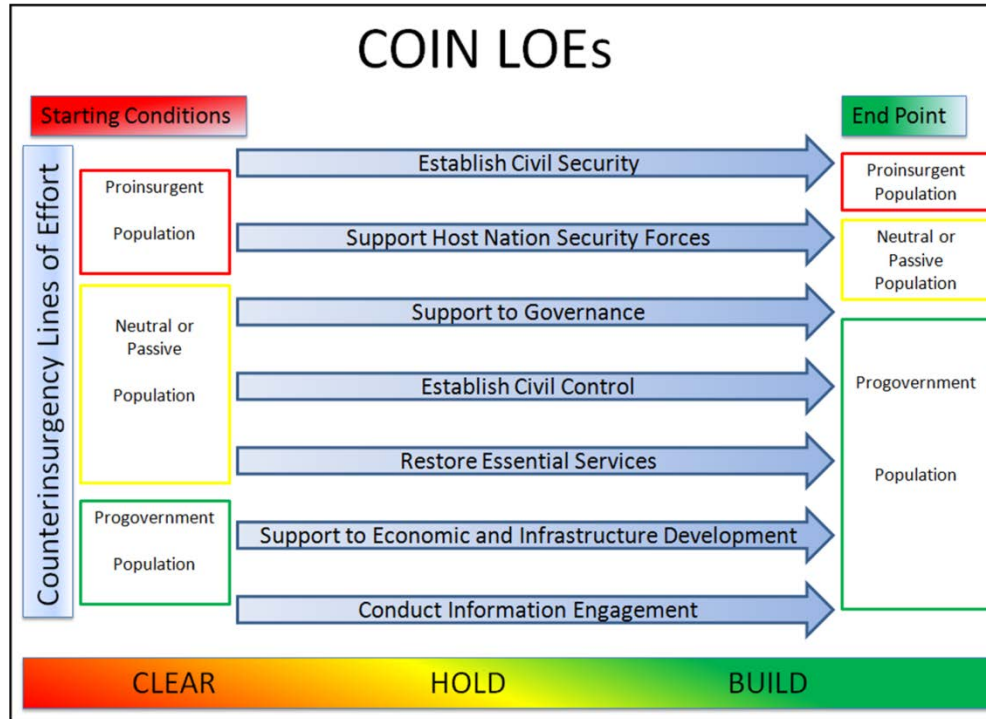
Figure 1. **Seven counterinsurgency lines of effort (LOEs) are described in FM 3-24.2 that Army leaders use to fight insurgents in an area of conflict (figure adapted from U.S. Department of the Army, 2009).**

Army COIN doctrine identifies seven lines of effort to fight insurgencies (U.S. Department of the Army, 2009). These lines of effort can be applied to goals at both the interpersonal and systems levels. Military leaders who consider only the interpersonal level, though, might make mistakes that undermine the broader operational mission. For example, building a school in a village may make sense at the interpersonal level where conversations with the population identify this need. However, taking a systems approach would help the military leader recognize other factors related to building a school in that village that might result in an increase in violence in the overall region. For instance, it would be wise to consider the following factors: who owns the land on which the school will be built; what is the likelihood that the person providing the information is aligned with insurgents; can the local government maintain the building, pay for teachers, or supply educational materials; how might neighboring villages respond to this school being built in this village and not in their community. Specifically regarding gender issues, the military leader should consider factors such as the culture's desire to educate only one gender, which may be in contrast to the U.S.'s action plan; will educating girls result in increased violence from extremists in the community; and will there be increased violence against female teachers in the region. The potential second- and third-order effects of what seems like a simple decision are numerous and devastating to COIN objectives if a systems approach is not taken. By considering ahead of time both the individual and systems levels, the

effectiveness of separating a vulnerable population from insurgent influence will create an opportunity for sustainable stability and national growth.

Of course, many barriers exist to understanding gender complexity at both the interpersonal and systems levels. At the interpersonal level, the military has had difficulty gaining access to half a population that is often cloistered by cultural norms, rampant violence, and pressure from extremists. Without understanding the needs, perceptions, and grievances of the women of a society, the U.S. military cannot effectively implement its COIN strategy at a systems level.

One strategy that the U.S. military has developed to gain access to this restricted population is to build teams of female Soldiers and Marines, (e.g., Female Engagement Teams, FETs; Cultural Support Teams, CSTs; Female Treatment Teams, FTTs; Lioness Program; Iraqi Women's Engagement Program) that can access the female population while respecting the cultural norms of the local people. These teams have greatly aided the military's understanding of females' roles, responsibilities, and levels of influence, leading to improved stability throughout Iraq and Afghanistan (Mehra, 2010).

In Afghanistan, FETs perform duties across all COIN lines of effort, making amazing strides toward increasing security and stability. Because Afghan culture precludes foreign males, such as U.S. male Soldiers, from engaging with local women, female Soldiers and Marines have the unique opportunity to interact with the women and identify gender issues that will inform operations in the area. For example, FETs are able to search females for weapons, gather valuable information about insurgents in the area, and facilitate agricultural training that results in economic growth in the communities. The use of specialized teams focused on engaging with the female population has helped Coalition Forces better understand local women's issues and concerns, which in turn facilitates problem solving and relationship building (FET Training Support Package, 2011).

Efforts at the interpersonal level, though, are only the beginning of what is needed to facilitate stability and peace in conflict regions. It is essential that military leaders appreciate the complexity of the sociocultural environment at a systems level and understand how gender considerations are an important component of the overall system. By reaching this level of awareness, leaders can make more informed decisions and better predict how operations can be successful across the entire operational environment. The remainder of the chapter will detail gender-related factors that should be considered in sociocultural systems thinking and how military leaders can use these factors to their advantage when making strategic decisions. Specifically, female influence, information sharing, and improved access to key aspects of the host nation society will be discussed in detail.

Sociocultural Systems and Gender Considerations

Women across the world are gaining more power in their households and increasing their influence in their communities (World Development Report, 2012). While female influence may be limited to blood relatives or as grand as leading nations, female influence is an important factor in the sociocultural system and, thus, an important consideration for military leaders in decision making. In a COIN environment, leveraging the influence of local women can

positively impact the thoughts and behaviors of their husbands and sons to not support an insurgency; turn to legitimate sources for governance, law, and employment; and facilitate male support for women's programs. Understanding female influence in a society can also provide alternative options for identifying and addressing issues in a community. The unique perspectives of host nation females may more directly address the issues in a region and provide sustainable options to solving problems than relying solely on male perspectives.

In addition to possessing unique avenues for influence, females in the population also might possess information that males either do not have or are unwilling to share. Women, like men, are often key observers of the behaviors around them. They know who lives in their communities, have communication networks with other women, and may form "underground" schools or activist groups to inform and influence others (Moore, Finley, Hammer, & Glass, 2012). Even women sequestered in their homes can have robust links to other families in the community through children, husbands, and technology (Holliday, 2012; Nemat, 2011). Military leaders who can understand female communication networks, access what women know, and impact information dissemination will be more successful in reaching military objectives (Haugegaard, 2010; Mehra, 2010).

Another advantage to seeking information from women in the population is that Soldiers can compare information provided by women with information acquired from men to achieve ground truth. Anecdotal evidence indicates that women and children often share valuable information about activities in the village that help Coalition leaders meet military objectives (Matson, 2011; Sloan-Prince, 2011). By speaking to local women directly, Soldiers can better ascertain the population's issues and needs without relying on stereotypes and personal biases. The information gathered by female Soldiers at the interpersonal level can be used by commanders to understand important considerations at a systems level. Last, by explicitly seeking the perspectives of women, a leader is empowering that half of the population to voice their opinions and participate actively in the safety, development, and overall progress of their families and villages.

In addition to understanding host nation females' abilities to influence and inform, supporting programs that enhance the health of women and children during times of war can facilitate stability in a region. Enhancing access to health care can significantly increase the lifespan of women and children, improve overall physical and mental development, and encourage female participation in the community (Human Development Report, 2010). With proper healthcare, women and children can focus on goals beyond survival and help their families and communities be more productive by being disease-free, encouraging healthy behaviors, and having a stronger workforce (Center for Global Development, 2007; UNAMA, 2011). Efforts to enhance the health of women and children can be as simple as improving access to basic healthcare, vaccinations, and improved nutrition. Successful programs from Iraq and Afghanistan have focused on improving training for health-related problems and developing educational programs for sanitation, efficient farming techniques, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning, and healthy pregnancies and safe births.

Improved stability and security is also influenced by improvements in education. Increased quality of education for boys and girls will not only improve health, but will improve

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the wealth of the nation, increase social and political involvement, and provide better opportunities for employment (Bertini, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). With this increase in capability, a previously vulnerable population may become less susceptible to insurgent influence. As local females learn about their rights and improve critical thinking skills, they may be less likely to believe false information from insurgents, be more prepared to educate their children to not support insurgents, and develop their capability to participate in their government. According to Mehra (2012), "The education of Afghan women is a critical lynchpin in fighting insurgency" (p. 40). By providing equal access to all levels of formal education, improved economic opportunities will develop through improved production of local skills and better access to foreign work (UNESCO, 2012; United Nations Development Programme, 2011). Economic success might also translate into improved governance as the population becomes more knowledgeable about their rights and more confident in holding government leaders accountable.

Good governance is a key component to enhancing stability (IMF, 2012), but good governance is a tricky endeavor. A critical element to successful governance is the involvement of the entire population. It is essential that both women and men play an active part in their local and national governance. Women must be able to voice their unique and valuable perspectives for growth and development in their communities (Bhattacharjea, 2011). The majority of regions of conflict are plagued by abuses to women and children that eat at the fiber of their society (Hamid, 2011). Numerous accounts of gender violence are reported in war zones (UNICEF, 2005). Some of these abuses are direct strategies to destroy the confidence and hope of the local people, while others are indirect outcomes of war itself (UNAMA/OHCHR, 2011). Throughout history rape has been used as a tool of war to terrorize and control large groups of people (United Nations, 1998). Without good governance and fair rule of law, these terroristic acts go unchecked and reduce the confidence that the population has in their leaders (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Rights and Democracy, 2010). Women and men need to participate equally at all levels of governance to improve the inclusion of differing perspectives, represent the interests of the entire population, and critically evaluate how the rule of law protects both females and males from continued violence.

Recently, more focus has been placed on women's roles in global security and governance. Women can be combatants, passive supporters of an insurgency, sole providers for their families while husbands are at war, activists, contributors to the health of their communities, and mediators for family disagreements. Because women may be involved in all aspects of conflict, women also should be included in the decision making for their countries before, during, and after conflict (Hudson, Caprioloi, Ballif-Spanvill, McDermott, & Emmett, 2008; Norville, 2011). Improved participation can be achieved through representation at local and national political levels, facilitating justice systems that protect women and children, and opening seats for women at the peace negotiation tables. Wueger (2011) stated, "Without a dramatic shift in our popular conceptions about war and the roles women can play during and after conflict, we will have a harder time escaping the cycle of war and will be unable to find new ways to limit conflicts and rebuild societies" (p. 3).

Other indirect outcomes of war that impact women (and thus society) are joblessness, poverty, loss of national identity, increased numbers of widows who turn to prostitution, vulnerabilities of internally displaced persons, and increased physical and mental illness

(USAID, 2007). These factors inhibit the development and stability of a population. As discussed elsewhere in this anthology, military leaders need to consider the impact these war-related outcomes have on mission success in their area of operations.

Improving females' access to employment and economic prosperity will aid a country in using the full potential of its population and enhance the overall competitiveness of that nation. This point is highlighted by Peters (1998) in his classic paper entitled "Spotting the Losers: Seven Signs of Non-Competitive States." He states that "Any country or culture that suppresses half of its population, excluding them from economic contribution and wasting energy keeping them out of the school and workplace, is not going to perform competitively with us" (p. 4). Without this competitive edge, a country will continue to struggle economically and politically and thus become more vulnerable to nefarious individuals and groups. While Peters presented a business perspective, he appreciates the importance of identifying failing and failed states as they relate to U.S. military success and ultimately American security.

It is no accident that the U.S. military's current campaign plans for each regional command highlight the importance of developing strong security, promoting good governance, and facilitating development to protect U.S. interests at home and overseas (Fraser, 2012; Ham, 2011; Mattis, 2011; Stavridis, 2012; Willard, 2010). Further, the campaign plan for military actions in Afghanistan focus on four lines of effort: security, development, governance, and economic stability (Eikenberry & Petraeus, 2011). As noted earlier, gender considerations cut across all lines of effort and can significantly impact the success of these endeavors.

From another perspective, failing to consider the system as a whole by excluding the perspective of half a population can result in military decision making that seems reasonable and appropriate, but inadequately identifies the underlying issues and second-order effects that might exist given the cultural dynamics of the society. As discussed in Tinsley and Mayo's chapter, what seemed like a perfectly reasonable decision to put in a well at the center of an Afghan village resulted in continual sabotage of the project, costly delays, and failure to build a trusting relationship with the villagers. By failing to understand the sociocultural dynamics of the women's need to communicate during their walks to the river, military leaders made decisions that were costly both financially and strategically. By examining the broader sociocultural system, leaders can be more efficient and effective in their decision making, resulting in swifter gains in the operational environment.

Sociocultural systems thinking is one way military leaders can understand the complexity of their area of operations and make better military decisions. Military leaders can leverage knowledge of gender-related factors and the significant influence of women within a society and culture to improve their military influence and inform strategic decisions. With improved knowledge of the entire population, military leaders can also understand better the true needs of the people, address these needs more thoroughly, and reduce the negative influence of insurgents. Women play a significant role in all cultures. To include women's perspectives, facilitate the development of the female population, and empower women to play a positive role in governance can be a game changer for the military in future conflict environments.

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Chapter 16

Assessing Traditional Somali Clan Culture
In the Context of Al Shabaab and Foreign Military Intervention

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For nearly 20 years now, Somalia has remained somewhat of an enigma—a stateless nation of people both incredibly adaptive to the rather harsh and fractured environment in which they live and yet perpetually resistant to the political impulses and pressures of external forces. Largely neglected by much of the international community following the departure of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I and II) in 1995, Somalis were forced to establish new systems of governance that reflected the major transformations that had occurred in both the country's political and social landscape as a result of a devastating civil war.

Although these new, heavily localized sociopolitical systems—which include the traditional *xeer* (Somali customary law), Somali private sector and/or militia-based mechanisms, *sharia* courts, and more formal political processes—vary in their level of jurisdiction and influence, all are subordinate to clan-based politics. Clan culture and politics have remained the prevailing force in Somalia since the civil war, when Somalis across the country were forced to flee to their affiliated clan strongholds for protection (Horst, 2008). This resulted in the creation of highly xenophobic clan fiefdoms, whose internal and external relations were directed primarily by lineage and constantly shifting alliances and divisions. Over the past two decades, this system has defined existence for Somalis, and while it has been challenged sporadically by Islamist and other "alien" impositions, it has remained largely intransigent—a manifestation of chief Somali characteristics of survivalism, pragmatism, and determination.

Somalia has descended into political chaos as a result of various competing forces, which include a weak and corrupt transitional federal government (TFG); two highly autonomous micro-states; Al Shabaab and other Islamist factions; warlords and criminal gangs; the Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Kenyan governments; the United States (U.S.); the United Nations (U.N.); and finally the clans. Questions regarding what type of governance will emerge, particularly in the South, continue to remain unanswered. The chief question is whether any form of formalized political system, be it democratic or Islamist, can survive in such a factionalized system—even if external forces, including Al Shabaab, were to be removed from the equation. Average Somalis lack the level of determination sufficient to establishing formal centralized governance. Self-determination has to a certain degree already been achieved and maintained through Somalis' traditional clan-based systems and through a constantly renegotiated balance of power. Thus there is little incentive on the part of Somalis to relinquish their traditional power systems to a higher authority, particularly as distrust of centralized governance is so prevalent amongst the population.

Somalia is unique in its social composition. The supremacy of clan-based social structures and politics has resulted in the creation of a seemingly impenetrable barrier to external forces. While both foreign and domestic political groups and initiatives have managed to ascend traditional systems to a certain extent, this has only been achieved through manipulation or collaboration. In addition, such initiatives have been fairly short-lived.

Studying Somalia's traditional cultural systems and the interaction between these systems and more modern political forces will help in understanding how to successfully navigate its environment, as well as similar environments where tribalism or "clanism" is the primary social force. Traditional institutions can be integral to maintaining peace and security at both the local and national level. It is therefore important to recognize the value of such traditional forces and preserve and harness those aspects that not only define the culture but can contribute considerably to stabilization efforts.

The Rise of *Xeer*

As mentioned earlier, during the civil war, Somalis fled to their traditional clan strongholds, thereby solidifying the primacy of clan-based sociopolitical systems. What emerged were somewhat distinct territorial clan enclaves, divided by the six major clans (Isaaq, Dir, Darod, Hawiya, Rahanweyn, and Digil) and their various sub-clans, guided by the *xeer* system[49]. *Xeer* is essentially comprised of a set of de facto conventions and procedures that determine the reciprocal rights and obligations between kin and clans, which include political relations, property rights, natural resource management, social welfare, and domestic matters (Shuke, 2011).

Although there are more common *xeer* rules followed by all Somali communities, a *xeer* contract is typically specific to relations between two clans and their sub-clans. *Xeer* will also differ according to livelihood system (Shuke, 2011) and is frequently renegotiated, making it highly multifarious and, consequently, exceedingly difficult to penetrate and transcend, as both Islamists and the international community have discovered in attempting to navigate and mitigate such systems. The primacy of this traditional system of local governance is evidenced by its intermittent use of Islamic or *sharia* law. *Sharia* law has been only partly incorporated into the *xeer* system; it remains subordinate to traditional authorities (clan elders), who permit its implementation to the extent that it does not interfere with the clan's rights and obligations, as well as clan elders', or *oday*/*odayaal*'s, decision-making powers and overall influence. The following example illustrates the relegation of *sharia* law to traditional leadership when it conflicts with clan-based politics:

> A woman from the relatively powerful Habr Gedir-Suleiman clan was being treated by a medical doctor from the less powerful Sheikhal sub-clan. The woman had a life-threatening infection at the time of delivering her first child. The doctor successfully delivered the baby, treated the infection, and advised the woman not to become pregnant again. However, seven

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[49] A map depicting the geographical distribution of the clans can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Somalia_ethnic_grps_2002.jpg

months later, the woman was brought back to the doctor [and was] pregnant with her second child. The doctor determined that . . . [the] removal of her uterus was required to save her life. After seeking formal authorization from the woman's family, the doctor performed a hysterectomy, and the woman [recovered]. However, at the time of the procedure, the family did not fully comprehend that the woman would no longer be able to have any more children. They decided to take the doctor to a local *sharia* court, whose authority was conferred upon it by the woman's clan. Initially, the court decided in the doctor's favor, determining that he had performed his medical duties appropriately. However, the woman's clan rejected the decision, and the man was forced to return to the court. This time, the man was fined $2,000, in a judgment according to *xeer* principles of mediation. (Le Sage, 2005, p. 41)

The Demands of a Clan-Based System

Somalis' rather extensive reliance upon *xeer* is a requirement of a heavily entrenched clan-based system that is governed by traditional ideals and practices of kinship, group allegiance, and territorial belonging. From a young age, Somali children are typically taught to memorize and recite their clan-based kinship genealogy, sometimes as far back as thirty generations of their patrilineal ancestors (Schaefer & Black, 2011). Clan identity and lineage is also a chief consideration in Somali naming practices. Somalis' second and third names are those of their father and paternal grandfather, respectively. In addition, when Somali women marry, they do not change their names, thus ensuring their original clan affiliation is maintained (CUHCC, 2002). The primacy of clan identity as it relates to the larger clan-based system and clan interests is the most important social factor amongst Somalis, particularly among Somalia's nomadic pastoralists. All other conditions and forces, including individual demands, are subordinate to the need to maintain clan solidarity and the collective security of the unit. Members of a clan, which include *mag-* or *diya-* (blood money) paying groups, "are obliged to support each other in political and jural responsibilities, especially in paying and receiving compensation for acts committed by members of one [clan] against another—even over vast distances, since it's kinship that bonds them" (Gundel & Dharbaxo, 2006, p. 6).

It is extremely important to note that Somalis have a tendency to project some of their own clan-based systems and behaviors onto others, including foreigners and foreign social and political systems. Clan culture very much shapes the lens through which Somalis view the outside world and their expectations of outsiders and their actions. There is a cautionary tale that demonstrates this point, often told by humanitarian security personnel to newcomers to the Somali landscape. Security officials tell of an instance when a male humanitarian worker began a romantic relationship with a young Somali woman in a small town in the North. After a few months, when the young Frenchman's tour was complete, he left Somalia and subsequently severed his relationship with the woman. The woman's clan was deeply offended; the man had basically dishonored both the woman and the clan by not offering her marriage. The non-governmental organization (NGO) for which the man worked was eventually forced to vacate the area. However, this was insufficient in satisfying the demands of *xeer* and correcting the injustice. A few years later, another Frenchman, who was working in the area for another NGO, was killed by the clan. The clan viewed this Frenchman as a member of the original man's clan, namely the French. His death meant that the debt owed by the "French" clan had finally been paid and the balance of justice restored.

While the previous example highlights a somewhat more extreme case of clan-based projection, even Somalis with a more sophisticated understanding of the external world and its functions and makeup maintain perceptions that are at least in part guided by clan-based beliefs. A conversation with a fairly learned Somali man in 2009, following U.S. President Barack Obama's election, highlights this point. The Somali elder was quite puzzled by Obama's decision to retain Robert Gates as Defense Secretary. Because Gates had served under the previous Republican administration, he considered Gates essentially to be a member of the "Republican" clan and therefore could not fathom how a president of the "Democratic" clan could possibly entrust such a senior-level position to him. Interestingly, the Somali man's assessment not only demonstrates the influence of clan culture, but also the rather limited understanding of democratic practices that are common among more educated Somalis and which is reflected in the composition and actions of the TFG.

Although Somalis' collective system of sociopolitical administration is often cited by the international community as being the greatest challenge to establishing more modern, individualistic judiciary processes, it also manages to serve as a deterrent against the Islamist agenda by severely limiting the sociopolitical space in which Islamists can operate. The intensely communal nature of individual clans and the collective character of inter-clan dealings create a natural barrier to the fundamentalist elements seeking to infiltrate these systems. The practice of collectivism also conflicts directly with *sharia* law, which is based in personal, not collective, responsibility (another reason why it has failed to overtake *xeer*). In addition, the high level of obedience required among the clan's members adds another layer of impenetrability. The practice of collective retribution— necessitated by the lawless context in which the clan system re-emerged—places considerable social pressure on clan members to abide by *xeer*. Because an individual's action can have consequences for the entire clan, each member's freedom to interact and collaborate with external forces is severely limited.

The clan provides a level of social protection for individual Somalis unparalleled by any other force—including Al Shabaab, which currently lacks sufficient political, economic, and social capital to offer a sustainable alternative to the traditional system. This social protection or welfare may come in the form of retribution against livestock rustlers or, in an urban area, housing and food assistance for a newly migrated clan member. Indeed, the clan's strength as a social resource is so significant that generations of Somali refugee and diaspora populations from Dadaab to Eastleigh to Minneapolis continue to identify with their affiliated clans and have established networks that reflect traditional systems of social support, although clan alliances and rivalries manifest at only a minimal level (Moore, 2007). This has been reflected somewhat by Al Shabaab's patterns of recruitment, which have been guided by clan affiliation. For instance, a recent assessment conducted by the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia (2010) found that more than half of the initial group of Minneapolis-based Somalis who returned to Somalia to join Al Shabaab were descendants of the Harti sub-clan, which was part of a multi-clan alliance with Al Shabaab. Interestingly, after this alliance broke down, these fighters turned against Al Shabaab, once again demonstrating commitment to protecting clan interests.

So long as Somalis continue to depend upon their clan support systems for physical protection and to ensure their livelihoods, these systems will remain the preeminent social force. However, the preservation of the clan-based system is becoming an increasingly difficult task,

particularly in the South, where competing interests—not only in the form of Al Shabaab and other Islamist forces but also including increased conflict over economic resources, mass displacement, and widespread criminality—have threatened traditional institutions' authority, shifting the balance of power by aggravating clan rivalries and marginalizing customary leadership.

The Supremacy of the Clan Elder

The highest level of authority within the clan is the clan elders, or *oday/odayaal*, who in the absence of any formal political infrastructure regained considerable influence immediately following the civil war. Clan elders (*oday)* have proven to be immensely important to upholding law and order and are integral to all Somali-led reconciliation processes (Shuke, 2011). The preservation of the balance of power is the *oday's* principal concern and function; hence, the *oday* play a critical governance role in managing conflict as mediators, facilitators, and negotiators. Even in areas where more formalized institutions exist, the *oday* are responsible for resolving 80-90% of all disputes, particularly those relating to peace and security (Gundel, 2006). The role of clan elders in all aspects of Somali society cannot be underestimated, and thus their substantive participation in any political process is absolutely necessary if such a process is to succeed.

In Southern Somalia, the heterogeneous nature of clan networks and the resultant volatile state of clan relations have made it exceedingly difficult to integrate traditional clan leadership mechanisms with more formalized institutions. Although the Transitional Federal Government (TFG or originally the TNG) was formed through a series of peace conferences that were highly inclusive, initially creating a fairly representative institution, TFG members have become increasingly disconnected from their constituencies and, as a result, are viewed by many as no longer being capable of representing constituency interests. Undoubtedly, there is significant separation between TFG members, who have been criticized for becoming increasingly politicized, and their clans and traditional leadership. In fact, there is debate as to whether those in high-level TFG positions share any real connection to the clans they are supposed to be representing (Hassan & Barnes, 2007). Without a strong sense of connection to the TFG, local support, which includes that of the clan elders, will continue to diminish, as Somalis tend to lend their support only when it is pragmatic to do so. If the TFG continues to operate as a separate and divisive institution, with no perceived benefits to offer local communities, it will remain solely a tool of opportunistic forces, lacking any real democratic purpose.

While the prospect of effectively incorporating clan elder leadership into more formalized political mechanisms has met serious challenges in the South, in the North in Somaliland a system of governance that combines both traditional and more modern, democratic mechanisms has had significant success, providing a sort of formula for efficiently merging these two seemingly contradictory forces. Somaliland operates as a republic with three branches of government: a presidency, a bi-cameral legislature, and a judiciary. It was the political will of Northern Somalia's traditional authorities, combined with the Somali National Movement's (SNM) democratic ambitions, that ultimately led to the formation of a functional, centralized government in Somaliland.

Nowhere is this more strongly reflected than in its bi-cameral legislature. The Senate, or House of Elders, is comprised of clan representatives, as well as numerous intellectuals and other well-respected individuals in Somali society. Its members are more of a consultative authority to the House of Representatives; they provide advisement on a host of political issues and on legislation proposed by the House. The House, which is comprised of elected officials, exercises sole authority to pass legislation and can override any objections made by the Senate. It also has control over all state financial matters, as well as any constitutional changes, and must approve international treaties.

The relationship between the two legislative Houses is cooperative, always maintaining a balance between traditional social forces and modern democratic practices and principles. It is successfully sustained through the clear delineation of each House's respective role and the continued preservation of each House's representativeness. The system is ultimately designed to provide clan elders and traditional forces with a national governmental role without politicizing their positions and subsequently opening them up to the type of corruption that has plagued the South (Iqbal, 2010). The strength of Somaliland's highly functioning hybrid government has prevented Al Shabaab and other opportunistic forces from effectively establishing themselves as a political force in the North.

The Proud and Ever Resistant Somali

Somalis' traditional social systems are in many ways an extension of particular Somali character traits that have been reinforced by decades of statelessness and self-dependency. Somalis have a strong egalitarian tradition. While the practice of individualism is severely limited in the traditional clan system, notions of equality and consensus are very much ingrained in the Somali psyche and way of life. Therefore, perceptions of equal representation and allocation are important. In addition, Somalis are extremely pragmatic and opportunistic, traits that no doubt manifested as a result of having to navigate such a lawless environment. The basic need to survive has necessitated the practice of pragmatism over principle, and this has proven to be problematic for building democratic institutions and rallying resistance to Islamist forces.

Any shift in support for Islamist forces, the TFG, or even foreign elements is largely directed by practical assessment of such a shift's tangible gains and not by ideological motivations, whether democratic or Islamist. Many of Al Shabaab's rank and file militiamen and clan partners, as Le Sage (2010) notes, "join Al Shabaab for parochial reasons and are not otherwise supportive of its radical Salafist ideology" (p. 2), which is almost completely alien to Somalis, whose religious and cultural tradition is rooted in mystical Sufism. Current clan support of Al Shabaab is essentially motivated by opportunism. Some clans provide financing as a political hedge because of uncertainty over the TFG's future. Others agree to support Al Shabaab as a means of gaining a short-term advantage over clan rivals. Meanwhile, many more young men and other individuals join the group for the financial or power incentives offered or are simply forced into it (Le Sage, 2010).

Somalis are a fiercely proud people (Samatar, 2010), particularly in relation to their cultural tradition. They are neither easily persuaded by the introduction of new ideological beliefs and customs, nor easily compelled to accept and adopt new belief systems, as many

foreign actors have discovered in their attempts to either transcend or subjugate traditional Somali practices. Al Qaeda learned this during the early 1990s, when its attempts to establish itself in the country were met with strong resistance. Al Qaeda leaders complained of Somalis' "lack of commitment" to *jihad* and the general difficulties of trying to navigate the clan system (Schaefer & Black, 2011).

Currently, Al Shabaab has encountered similar challenges to transcending clan-based systems, as ideological support remains limited. Although Al Shabaab was able to capitalize on the population's strong opposition to the 2006 invasion of Ethiopian forces, the removal of those forces almost immediately resulted in a sharp decline in local support. Somalis' initial support of Al Shabaab was stirred by a strong sense of nationalism, which rather interestingly seems to manifest only when the population is confronted by a foreign threat. In addition to the emergence of nationalistic sentiment, the population recognized Al Shabaab's value as a tool for defeating the Ethiopian forces. This once again demonstrates Somalis' opportunistic tendencies. After Ethiopian troops withdrew, alliances with Al Shabaab were viewed as no longer necessary. Although successful at engaging in guerilla warfare, the Islamist group could not effectively manage clan disputes and the political infighting that re-emerged immediately after the Ethiopians' withdrawal.

Because most Somalis are deeply xenophobic, not only at the national level but at the clan level as well, they are understandably very distrustful of any force perceived as being directed by external entities. Currently, that includes Al Shabaab, whose actions have been increasingly influenced by foreign jihadists (International Crisis Group, 2010). In fact, there is growing resentment toward Al Shabaab's perceivably alien actions, which included both the destruction of Sufi religious shrines in the South and the bombings of civilians, including the attack on the Benadir University graduation ceremony that killed numerous students and school staff. The majority of Somalis found both the destruction of religious heritage sites and the murder of students deeply offensive to their sense of tradition and pride.

Somalis also value personal economic and educational advancement, which is typically regarded as an accomplishment for the entire clan. Somalis can be a very progressive people, as evidenced by their fairly extensive international trade links. It is important to highlight this fact about Somalis because it is easy to assume the opposite, given the severely fractured and xenophobic state in which they have lived for nearly 20 years. Although stateless, Somalis have managed to develop very strong global economic/financial networks that have ensured their continued international awareness and relevance. In addition, Somalis retain rather robust ties to the over a million Somalis living in diaspora communities around the world, thus increasing their exposure to external advances, including those relating to business, education and governance, and more progressive ideals.

Ultimately, the foreign nature of Al Shabaab and its radical ideology, coupled with Somalis' penchant for pragmatism, especially as it relates to their economic/financial livelihoods, will serve as the most significant factors facilitating Al Shabaab's demise. Continued violation of tradition and growing resentment over the imposition of what are essentially foreign conservative "Islamic" practices will also increase resistance to Al Shabaab. Somalis have found

it difficult to accept prohibitions on watching football and playing music, and more significantly, restrictions on the roles of women, who contribute considerably to Somalia's economy.

Al Shabaab within the Clan System

For decades, Islamist forces have attempted to infiltrate and transcend Somalia's traditional clan-based system. However, they have continuously found themselves subject to the delicate clan balances that govern local communities and forced to work within these pre-established systems. Although Islamists have tried to distance themselves from "clannish" behavior, the primacy of clan interests and relations within Somali society has driven them to adopt clan-based strategies to gain position. As Schaefer and Black (2011) have noted, "This complex and interlocking [traditional clan-based] system establishes the rules by which Somali politicians, warlords and even terrorists must abide. As Al Shabaab has developed in recent years and sought to balance domestic priorities with international jihadi ideals, the role of the clan has continued to plague and shape the organization" (p. 8).

A prime example of the many challenges Islamist forces have faced when attempting to transcend clan politics occurred in the main town of Luuq in the Gedo region during the 1990s. From 1991–1996, an Islamist group known as Al Ittihad managed to establish itself as the chief authority in Luuq. Al Ittihad formed an Islamic association, which held overall political authority. Directly beneath the association was a district council, which was appointed by the association and which managed daily district affairs. The Islamist group also organized its own Islamic militia. Most of Al Ittihad's main leaders were from the area's dominant clan, the Maheran; however, as Al Ittihad's popularity increased, owing to its success at maintaining law and order, its leadership grew to include members of other clans, some of which were not locally based. Secularists from the Maheran clan seized on this new development to claim that Al Ittihad was being directed by foreign elements seeking to take control of Maheran land. To allay Maheran fears, Al Ittihad formally declared itself to be Maheran. However, this only aggravated other local clans, which had lent their support to Al Ittihad because they believed its authority would diminish Maheran hegemony (Menkhaus, 2002).

Divisions within the Maheran clan ultimately led to the demise of Al Ittihad. Al Ittihad was initially accepted by all factions because of its ability to portray itself as both representing and transcending Maheran interests. In reality, the group never managed to separate itself from the Maheran; it derived all of its authority from the Maheran and thus served as an extension not only of the clan's power, but also of its weaknesses and divisions. In the end, Al Ittihad proved incapable of overcoming rivalries within the Maheran and between other clans, and accordingly found little support from the local population when Ethiopian troops attacked its forces in 1996 (De Waal, 2007).

This point is very significant. The fact that local Somalis did not feel compelled by any nationalistic sentiment to defend Al Ittihad against a foreign invasion, particularly one by a long-hated enemy, demonstrates how little commitment they had to the group's Islamist ideology and practices.

More recently, Al Shabaab has experienced similar difficulties operating within the clan-based system. Al Shabaab's inability to escape clan influence "has affected the way the group projects force, recruits fighters, and influences the Somali population" (Schaefer & Black, 2011, p. 8). Although the overall situation is quite complex due to the numerous groups and factions (and subsequent alliances and rivalries) that have emerged over the past few years as a result of Al Shabaab's increased influence, current battle lines are drawn and directed mostly by clan affiliation. Most significant is Al Shabaab's recent internal rift between two of its allied clan factions: the Isaaq/Arap in the North and the Rahanweyn/Mirifle/Laysan in the South (Bay/Bakool regions). It has been reported that tensions have developed between Mukhtar Robow, a longtime Islamist leader and head of Al Shabaab's Rahanweyn faction, and Ahmed Abdi Godane, key Al Shabaab leader of the Northern Isaaq clan. Robow, who has built a strong base in Bay and Bakool, where his clan is dominant, has been frequently criticized by his more ideological partners, which include Godane, for placing clan-based demands above those of the "organization" and its ideology. For instance, Robow gave safe passage to fellow clansmen who were TFG members and has continued to permit humanitarian aid in his area and in support of his clan (Schaefer & Black, 2011).

Robow's reluctance to place ideological concerns, or Al Shabaab's demands, above that of his people's needs once again demonstrates the limitations the Islamist group struggles with in advancing its interests amongst a pragmatically driven clan-based system. Robow's relationship with his other clan members is fairly symbiotic in nature, and their continued support and tolerance of him and his jihadi activities depends upon his ability to successfully manage that relationship. This includes not placing undue burdens on his clan for reasons important only to Al Shabaab.

The situation for Godane, who operates in the South, is quite different. Godane, who is of the Northern Isaaq, does not possess a strong clan base in the South (Horadam, 2011) and so does not retain the sort of traditional connections that Robow has to the Somalis over whom he presides. This makes his leadership far more dangerous, as there are seemingly no limits to what he is willing to demand of the Somalis under his jurisdiction. Although even Godane has been known to favor his own Isaaq clansmen in certain situations (Horadam, 2011), with no substantial social or familial linkages to the Southern clans, he exercises little consideration for these populations' collective needs. This lack of connection, however, also means that he will continue to struggle to maintain currently unstable inter-clan alliances.

Rather remarkably, the predominance of clan interests and politics over ideological motivations has also manifested during gun battles, particularly in Mogadishu. The Rahanweyn clan actually withdrew from Mogadishu because the clan's elders believed that their fighters were bearing a disproportionate share of the casualties (Schaefer & Black, 2011). In another instance, Al Shabaab fighters from one clan actually began firing on Al Shabaab fighters from another clan because they believed the other clan's fighters were not doing their fair share. In the case of the Rahanweyn, the clan elders' decision to withdraw due to perceived inequities between their clan and the other clans once again demonstrates the challenge of transcending traditional Somali notions of egalitarianism pertaining to clan-based alliances.

Conclusion

When attempting to navigate Somalia's traditional clan-based system, several significant factors must be considered. First and foremost, this social system is collective. Accordingly, those living within the system are constrained in their behavior and level of individual autonomy. Second, the prevalence of clan-based relations means that the practice of social collectivism is often projected onto external characters and systems. In other words, the way in which Somalis view the external world is very much guided by their xenophobic beliefs. Third, because Somali society is heavily factionalized, nationalist sentiment seems to manifest only in the face of external threat. However, the intervention of external or foreign forces is not always met with nationalist fervor and resistance, particularly when such intervention is viewed as being advantageous to traditional authorities. Such behavior demonstrates Somalis' rather opportunistic tendencies as well as their penchant for pragmatism, which constitutes the final significant defining sociological factor of traditional Somali culture. Somalis employ a pragmatic rather than principled approach to political affairs. Thus, loyalties outside of the traditional space are always subject to change.

Somalia's social landscape is highly distinct, due mostly to the prominence of its clan-based system and the practice of *xeer*, which continues to be the underlying force governing Somali relations. While the clan-based system is often faulted with being archaic and the *xeer* system criticized as contrary to modern notions of justice, these traditional institutions create a mostly impenetrable barrier to external political and social forces seeking to implant themselves in Somali society. While the international community seeks the establishment of a democratically based system of central governance for Southern Somalia, it must consider the influence and delicacies of traditional Somali social structures. The fact that clan alliances and rivalries are frequently manipulated for political gain demonstrates the clans' significance as a political force. Transcending traditional clan culture in the current political environmental will prove difficult, if not impossible. However, the prevalence of the clan-based system makes its incorporation into any new political system essentially unavoidable in any situation. Fortunately, traditional Somali beliefs and practices of egalitarianism, negotiation and consensus are far more similar to those found in democratic systems than in radical Islamic institutions.

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Chapter 17

**Chutes, Ladders, and Social Tectonics: A Dilettante's Framework for
Understanding Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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For the past year protests across North Africa and the Middle East have riveted us. Hosni Mubarak, Zine Al-AbidineBen Ali, and Qaddafi gone. Syria's Assad under unprecedented pressure. *Revolutionary*. Or is it? Shortly after ousting Mubarak, activists found themselves back in Tahrir Square protesting the authoritarian proclivities of the Egyptian generals.

In Russia, meanwhile, 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, tens of thousands took to the streets to protest Putin's autocratic practices and the oligarchy at the top of the political economic order. Wasn't this social battle already won? Is such *déjà vu* the Arab Spring's fate 20 years from now?

On the other side of the Atlantic, the Occupy Wall Street movement and related protests ignited a different kind of debate among Americans regarding the social order: What happened to us when we weren't looking? How did we find ourselves in a situation in which the United States was rated last among rich countries in six categories related to social justice (Bertelsman Foundation, 2011)?[50] Here, the question was not *if* something profound had changed but, rather, *how* it occurred while we had our backs turned.

This chapter is not about the U.S. or the Middle East, however, but Sub-Saharan Africa. To many observers, the history of Africa since decolonization is one of hopeful ascents, bewildering implosions, and stubborn stagnation. Ghana plummeted from a middle-income country wealthier than South Korea in the 1950s to a poor country with a Gross Domestic Product around 1/15th of South Korea in 1999 (The World Bank, 2011). Rwanda was the darling of the international development set in the 1980s, was torn by genocide, then underwent authoritarian rejuvenation in the 2000s. Zimbabwe rose economically in the late 1980s and 1990s only to slide into financial, social, and political chaos in the 2000s. Côte d'Ivoire was a stable, regional economic engine for decades only to "inexplicably" plunge into civil war in the 2000s. South Africa emerged from decades of isolation as Sub-Saharan Africa's largest economy—and one of the most violent places on Earth, particularly for women, and most particularly for women living in that country's urban slums.

The direction of social change in Sub-Saharan Africa confounds us. Seemingly stable political economies suddenly plunge many layers, as in the child's game Chutes and Ladders. A

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[50] The six categories are poverty prevention, access to education, labor market inclusion, social cohesion and non-discrimination, health, and intergenerational justice.

seeming basket case—Mozambique in the early 1990s—suddenly ascends as if a lucky roll of the dice landed it on one of the game's ladders. Around these surprising climbs and slides, the vast majority of communities trudge forward, with little drama, upheaval, or world attention, gradually trying to work their way across the game board.

The chutes, ladders, and slow, steady forward progress of nations and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa do not lend themselves to easy calculation or prediction. But these changes are not utterly random. This paper describes a conceptual framework and analytical approach to understand social probability, to make sense of the past and to make educated guesses about the future.[51] The framework is concerned with structural changes, ones which create new winners and losers, shift distributions of power and authority, and alter shared norms and assumptions about how the society should work. The framework can augment existing scenario planning processes and improve the analytical foundations upon which these are constructed. Analysis derived from using the framework can also be useful for understanding the pros and cons of different development, humanitarian, political, and economic interventions.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first describes social changes observed in Mali during its democratization and decentralization efforts in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The second section outlines the analytical framework and approach that is the heart of this paper. The third section offers a set of questions that help operationalize the framework. In the fourth and final section, the chapter applies the framework to the Mali context.

Chutes, Ladders, and Incremental Change in the Inner Niger River Delta, Mali, West Africa, in the Late Twentieth Century

The Pondori Flood Plain, situated in the inner Niger River delta in Mali, West Africa, is inundated each rainy season.[52] Between around July and November, rice is cultivated on the plain. The crop is the lifeblood of sedentary farmers predominantly of the Marka ethnic group. As the water recedes, forage plants sprout, making the plain an important livelihood source for semi-nomadic Fulani pastoralists. A third ethnic group,[53] the Bozo, has long devoted itself to fishing in the central channel of the Niger River but also in the seasonal lakes and ponds created by flooding. The plain encompasses 37 small villages and around 45,000 residents.

Pondori is not an important political-economic zone in Mali. But there was a time when this part of Africa was comparatively wealthy and powerful. From around 800 CE to 1500 CE, the kingdoms of West Africa were important and extensive. Timbuktu—222 miles from Pondori—housed the world's largest library. There was a steady long-distance trade across the

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[51] Kahneman (2011) and Taleb (2007) remind us that within complexity, the future is axiomatically unknowable. There will always be utterly unpredictable "black swan" events. And there are cognitive biases and heuristics that pose strong challenges to our ability to imagine utterly novel futures. The framework offered here is not about prediction. Rather it is about helping us ask questions about the social forces, patterns, and histories that shape probabilistic futures. It is focused more on understanding social change between, behind, and around the "chutes" and "ladders" that tend to garner the attention of journalists, academics, and the public imagination.

[52] I lived in the flood plain for 18 months in 2001-2002, doing doctoral research. Previously, I had lived for two years in a southern Mali village (1983–85) and two years in Bamako, the capital (1987–88).

[53] The ethnic composition of the zone is simplified for this chapter.

Sahara, reaching to the Maghreb, the Middle East, and southern Europe. In 1818, the last coherent West African empire, associated with the Fulani ethnic group, came to power with a seat not far from Pondori. The empire significantly reordered power and privilege, yet control of Pondori proved elusive. The French took nominal control in the late 1800s, but officials rarely visited the plain during the colonial period. As long as the local chiefs collected and submitted taxes, Pondori was largely left to its own social organization.

At independence in 1960, Mali's citizens elected Modibo Keita president. He embarked on a soviet-influenced program of national development. By 1968 the country was functionally bankrupt, and an army officer named Moussa Traore led the overthrow of Keita. Traore stayed in office until 1991, becoming increasingly tyrannical, corrupt, and detested during this time. Mali's economy struggled, and the country slid into the ranks of the world's five poorest countries. In 1991, Traore was overthrown when Mali joined in the global wave of popular uprisings after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Aided by international donors, the country embarked on a period of democratization and decentralization. If democratization is measured by peaceful turnover of power between individuals and parties, today—in 2012—Mali is one of the few successful democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

But oddities confound this picture. Consider:

1. In the mid-to-late 1990s, both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) considered Mali one of the leading lights on the continent with regard to democratization and market reforms. The economy grew in unprecedented ways, seeming to confirm the relationship between political freedom, rule of law, and growth. Mali had rolled the dice, and landed on a ladder. Yet in the 2002 presidential elections—Mali's third since 1991—citizens elected former army general Ahmadou Toumani Touré. Touré ran a clever, non-party campaign as an independent. In essence, Touré won the election by campaigning against multi-partyism. Another roll of the dice, but this time a chute.

2. Since then, Mali's parliament has acted much like a single party state even though it is composed of elected representatives from many different parties. Touré, again campaigning on the idea of taking politics out of multi-party democracy, easily won re-election in 2007.

3. Decentralization created about 700 "communes" in the country, and elections for commune councils were held in 1999 for the first time. By 2002, popular opinion on the councils was divided between amusement, cynicism, and fear in Pondori's three communes. Many people were amused because so little seemed to be changing when it came to State services and public goods. Many more were cynical, because commune councils were already viewed as having been co-opted by long-standing, local elites. And a very few—mostly elderly—were afraid that councils would destroy social cohesion. In Pondori, there were no chutes or ladders. Just the social tectonics of everyday survival, production, and reproduction.

At least that is how it seemed on the surface. What I would learn was that the most profound structural changes in Malian society were happening behind the seeming sameness in Pondori, while at the level of the nation—despite apparent dramatic chutes and ladders—things were mostly staying the same.

My first clue came during a three-hour conversation one hot, humid morning in 2001. I was interviewing an elder in one of Pondori's peripheral villages. He had seen the zone resist changes sought by French colonialists, by the post-independence Dirigiste State and by the 22-year military dictatorship. He likened these attempted interventions to the "doings of mosquitoes," laughing heartily at the grandiose, naïve, and unthreatening plans of outsiders.

He became somber when the conversation turned to the commune councils. But his eyes blazed. He denounced the councils with an unexpected anger and intensity. I was taken aback and asked him to tell me more. Many others on the plain, I said, thought the councils were a joke, a toy for children—just more mosquitoes. Why, I asked, was he so angry?

"They've turned power into a whore," he said, shaking his head. "From now on, it's for anybody who can pay for it, who can turn a head through clever words. I never thought it could happen, but they've ruined power itself."

How could power itself be "ruined," I asked myself? And why would this make an elder—someone who has seen many attempts to alter Pondori society—both angry and fearful? And how might this shift in the nature of power relate to chutes, ladders, and the slow grind of everyday life for the vast majority of Pondori residents? Over the last nine years, my attempts to answer those questions have led to the following conceptual framework.

A Dilettante's Framework for Understanding Change in Sub-Saharan Africa

It is surprising how little social theory underpins international development efforts. Economic theories dominate the strategies and investments of governments north and south; political science dominates diplomacy and statecraft. Historical analysis is present in most cases, although quality varies widely.[54] But social theory is, largely, absent.

Perhaps this is not surprising, since the very term "social theory" is contested. Is social theory about "the logical and philosophical questions" at issue in development? Is it about explaining the march towards modernity, or about critique, or about bettering our lots (Giddens, 1994, p. 1)? Further, is it really possible to talk about social theory, singular? Are we not better served by context-specific theories, plural?

These are crucial academic concerns, which I set aside here. What follows really is a kind of bricolage, a patchwork of theories from a wide variety of disciplines that normally do not speak to one another. I have been developing and using this framework for ten years, for the most part in the context of helping international and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) develop projects, programs, and strategies which treat root causes rather than just

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[54] See, for example, critiques of these analyses in Ferguson (1994), Mitchell (1995), or Uvin (1998).

symptoms of social inequality and injustice. The framework guides users to understand the nature of structural change and to develop strategies that produce it for the benefit of society's less powerful. But it starts by asking a counterintuitive—and less studied—set of questions: Why does so much of social life stay the same from day to day? Why do we all seem to agree on so much? Why isn't there more conflict than there is?

Understanding Slow Social Tectonics

The framework's foundation is structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). Four essential elements of this theory are:

1. ***Resources, and authority over them:*** Social organization is, in the last analysis, about the allocation and control of material resources. These are fundamental societal choices—sometimes explicit, sometimes built on unspoken "rules of the game"—about how resources should flow, accumulate, and be invested and valued. Social structure legitimizes agreements (makes them seem "normal" and "unquestioned") about which kinds of actors have authority, firstly, over material objects and goods and, secondly, over people. Two simple examples that reveal very different social organization and culture: In Mali, paternal uncles—not fathers—frequently have authority over male children. Contrast this to the role of fathers in Europe or North America. In Europe and North America, private land ownership is the norm. Contrast this to Pondori, where the idea that a single person should be able to amass large tracts of land simply because he has the money to do so is deemed incoherent. Productive land is not privately owned; it is publicly allocated by trusted elders.

2. ***Structure***: The kind of "structure" most important to the Dilettante's Framework is a cognitive phenomenon. It is carried in our heads, not shown on a map. Structure accomplishes three crucially important social goals: it establishes agreed-upon significations (meanings), accepted forms of domination, and agreed-upon criteria for legitimizing the social order. People produce and reproduce structure through enactment of taken-for-granted routines, conventions, and institutions. In structuration theory, institutions "are perfectly analogous to the rules of the game in a competitive team sport. That is, they consist of formal written rules as well as typically unwritten codes of conduct that underlie and supplement formal rules" (North, 1990, p. 4). Much of this is below the surface of conscious thought. Mundane examples include acceptable dress, forms of automatic behavior like greetings, conversational rules, and so forth. More interesting and less obvious examples include notions of what constitutes "work," "leisure," a "good person," a "good life," individualism, and even rationality itself (which differs from a normative standpoint from culture to culture). Even the very idea of what constitutes a legitimate person is socially and cognitively constructed. An extreme example of this is the institution of slavery (in order to enslave, one group must dehumanize another or deem them "not people"; in 1787, delegates to the U.S. Constitutional Convention determined that slaves were 3/5 of a "person"). But more subtle and far more pervasive in any society are the "rules of the game" that structure what certain groups of people can do, be, or say. Again, simple examples abound: castes in India, women in Saudi Arabia. In Mali oral history can be recited only by a certain kind of person, a *griot.*

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3. *Agents/agency*: Individuals—agents—are not passive victims of structure. Agents in a sense both are produced by and produce social structure. People are deeply knowledgeable about successful social interaction. They can step back and assess the context in which they act, and can talk about the constraints to freedom of action. They gauge their social interactions carefully, watching how others respond and seeking to successfully fit in.[55] In the struggle over resources in a largely rationalized and disenchanted world, agents are almost always more successful through fitting in—playing within the rules of the game—than through revolution.

4. *Explainability*: Understanding how social processes play out requires understanding of two forms of consciousness. First is "discursive consciousness" or people's ability to put into words why they act and think as they do. Second is "practical consciousness." This form of consciousness refers to that which is not easily accessible to conscious reasoning. Practical consciousness underpins the myriad routines we engage in daily, without ever thinking about them. There is no hard line between the two forms of consciousness. The only difference in a particular context with particular groups is "between what can be said and what is characteristically simply done" (Giddens, 1984, p. 7).

Structuration answers the question, "why does social life stay so much the same?" Our agreements about meanings, significations, and rules of the game are underrated and hard-won achievements. What would life be like if, every day, we had to remake and reinvent what it means to be "rational," to be "ethical," to be "kind," to be "polite," to be "a good worker"? What if every day we woke up and had to renegotiate basic roles—husband, wife, son, daughter—or, even worse, forms of group identity and boundaries? The stickiness of institutions—the rules of the game—is fundamental to the survival of human groups. It is for good reason that, once established, the rules are very, very difficult to change. Stickiness is reinforced by the reflexive relationships between authority over resources and the social order: people and groups almost never willingly give up what they possess or control for some idea of the greater good. In this way, particular relationships of dominance and subordination, wealth and poverty, power and marginalization are legitimized. Figure 1 schematizes these elements.

The thick, dotted arrows leading out from social action convey the duality of structure and agency. Social action can reproduce structure and so reinforce, strengthen, and normalize it. Or social action can provoke struggles over shared meanings, legitimatization, and forms of authority/domination.

Expanding Our Idea of "Resources"

Upon applying the above schema to social change in Sub-Saharan Africa, one quickly runs into problems when considering the distribution and flow of resources. In places like Mali and Pondori, people trade more consequentially in forms of resources that either do not exist or are quite marginal elsewhere. In addition, authority over people takes on new meanings and importance in labor-intensive, rural, agricultural, and poor societies.

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[55] This reflexive monitoring builds on the social-psychological school of symbolic interactionism. For a full coverage see Mead (1967), particularly Part III, "The Self."
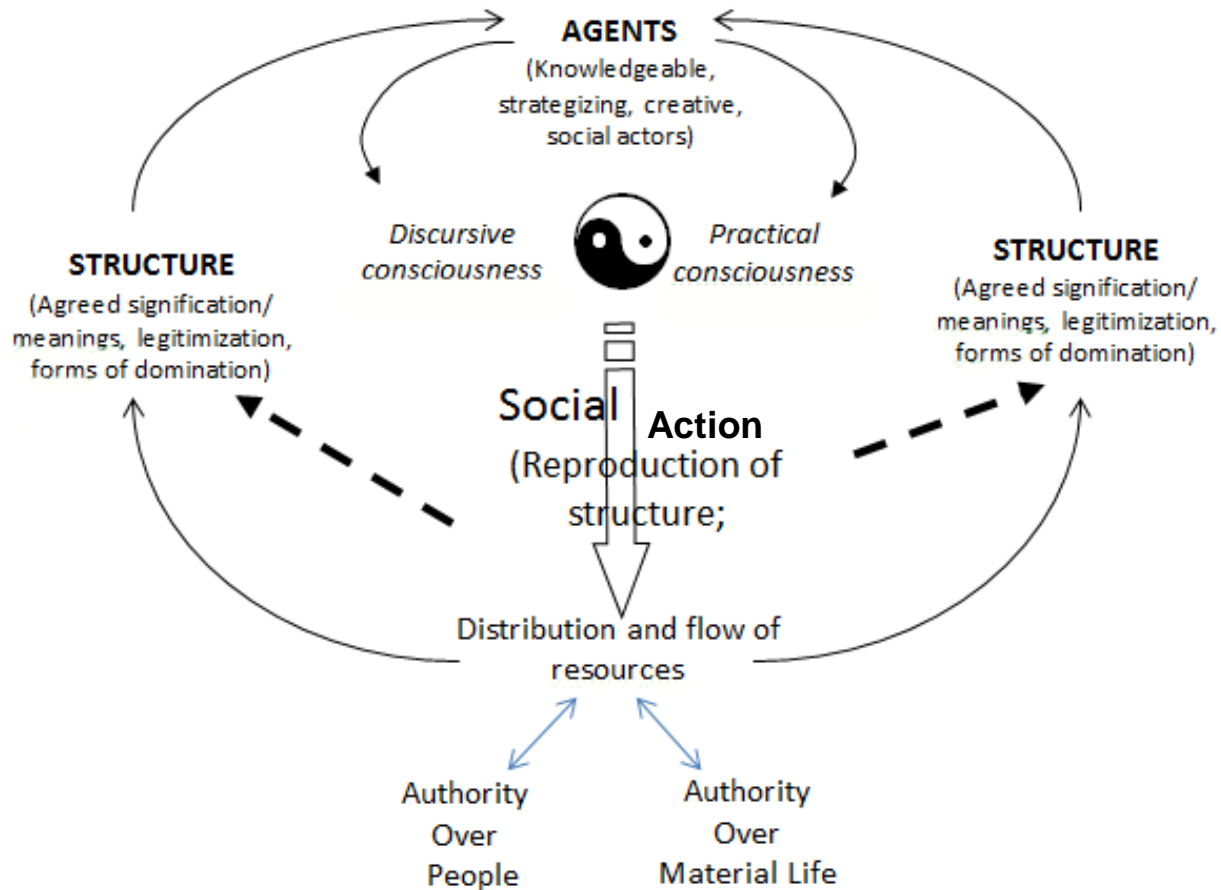
Figure 1. **The Dilettante's Framework showing how certain social relationships are legitimized.**

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work (1986) usefully supplements the schema above.[56] Bourdieu argues that the usual forms of "capital"—human, economic, material goods, land—need to be augmented. People also trade in (1) symbolic/cultural capital, (2) social capital, and (3) political capital.[57]

Symbolic/cultural capital can be seen in the relative power wielded by professors in the academy. Largely poorly paid, they carry more influence than a pure political or economic argument would accord them. It is also seen in the strange phenomenon of movie stars such as Angelina Jolie or Sean Penn being asked by media to provide "expert" commentary on poverty or humanitarian disasters.

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[56] Bourdieu built his thinking first from field study with the Kabyle people of Algeria, then moved on to a seminal study of French society (1984).

[57] The three categories are a simplification. Bourdieu discussed many different forms of "capital" in his extensive writings.

Social capital refers to who we know, how we know them, and what these relationships can produce. Social capital can be understood as social networks, formal (clubs, associations) or informal. Networks may serve to deepen social cohesion, reinforce the status quo, or facilitate social change.

Political capital can refer both to the power and perquisites of formal office and to the "little 'p' political" capital associated with influence. When the head of Goldman Sachs and other Wall Street bankers can get preferential rules through Congress, they are demonstrating their (little "p") political capital. Common sense is sufficient for understanding political capital: if politics is about who gets what and why, then political capital is the stock of expertise, status, connections, and relationships that allow an agent to influence politics.

What matters for understanding social change are not the categories of capital per se. More interesting and important, these different kinds of capital are convertible, just as dollars are convertible into other currencies, and vice versa. Struggles over resources—and hence struggles over the production, reproduction, or alteration of social structure—often involve the "cashing in" of certain forms of capital for others. So, in patrimonial contexts, the social capital of patron-client relationships is at times converted into economic capital ("work for me"), and at other times converted into political capital ("vote for me"). We feel this intuitively. It is at the root of phrases like "spending political capital" or "calling in a debt" that is merely a debt of reciprocity. Figure 2 adds the notion of multiple forms of capital to the Dilettante's Framework.

So far, we have focused mostly on the issue of sticky institutions and social stability. In other words, we have begun to see how we can answer our initial set of questions: Why does so much of social life stay the same from day to day? Why do we all seem to agree on so much? Why isn't there more conflict than there is? Now we turn attention to explaining sudden change, the chutes and ladders of this paper's title. For this, Raymond Williams' (1978) remarkable analytical tool for understanding hegemony is useful, in combination with a novel conception of power rooted in the work of anthropologist Eric Wolf and historian Michel Foucault, as filtered through several decades of practice by social activists.

Understanding Structural Change

Giddens and Bourdieu help us understand why things stay so consistent. Raymond Williams' notion of hegemony gives us the tools to understand change. For Williams, hegemony refers to the process and relationships through which dominant groups maintain their positions, and through which subordinated groups either unconsciously acquiesce or mount challenges. Hegemonic processes both draw on and reinforce "common sense" in society and the "normality" of existing relationships. The maintenance of dominant-subordinate groups is not, therefore, a grand conspiracy: much of hegemony happens in Giddens' world of practical consciousness, through reproduction of norms and values, through internalized rules of the game. Hegemony is not something that the powerful do to others; hegemony is a shared social achievement, participatory rather than exclusionary in nature:

> [I]f our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result
> of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn,

then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has been
or is. (Williams, 2001, p. 137)

Hegemony is always partial, always at risk; people are not, after all, passive dunces. Hegemony is unstable: breaks with it, or within it, happen often. Some succeed—they alter some aspect of the existing hegemony—and many disappear. Some are big and garner attention— Occupy Wall Street—and some are extremely small and entirely unnoticed. As a result of breaks large and small, hegemony must be continuously renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also "continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all of its own" making (p. 112). Hegemony helps us understand social change between the slow, social tectonics of Giddens and Bourdieu, and the (black swan) instances of true revolution. Hegemony and its analysis, in other words, help us understand the "chutes and ladders" in African change processes.

Williams advises us to analyze hegemony by looking at its renewal, reproduction, defense, and modification processes. We can do this by breaking hegemony into a number of component parts.
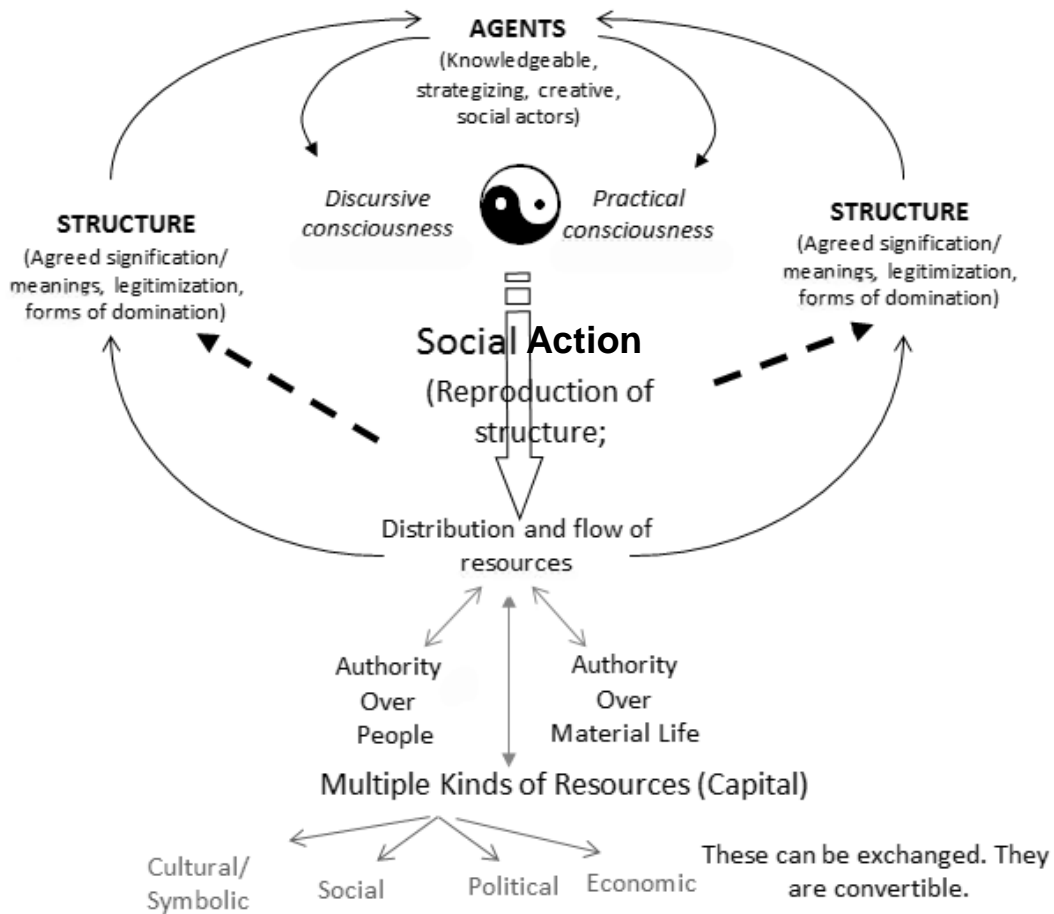

Figure 2. **The Dilettante's Framework showing multiple forms of capital.**

Institutions and Their Inter-Relationships

Institutions, in Williams, refer not to cognitive rules (as they do for Giddens in his structuration theory) but, rather, more formal and public entities such as the church, educational systems, political systems, legal systems, economic systems, the fourth estate, the family, marriage, and so forth. Williams' institutions are complex, multidimensional constellations of social arrangements and practices. Institutions change of course, and this change can both be an effect of larger changes within the social whole, or foster such larger-scale changes.

What is most useful, analytically, is a historical perspective on how the importance/dominance of particular institutions—and especially constellations of them—has changed, as dominance in a society evolves, is contested, and is defended. An example from the U.S.: For five decades following the great Depression, the institutions of State (particularly the judiciary), private banks, private investment firms, and ratings agencies were related in ways to prevent irresponsible speculation. All of these relationships were reconfigured (power taken away from the State, from ratings agencies, from regulators) in the 1980s and 1990s due to the deployment of political and economic capital by private sector actors, and with little public opposition. The effects of these reconfigurations on income inequality, in a very short twenty years, were unprecedented. It is enlightening in this example to see the "ladder" of the 1990s, the "chute" of the 2000s, and where U.S. citizens find themselves now.

Traditions

Traditions are things we've always done, and the way we've always done them. When publicly evoked, however, traditions are invariably selective versions of the past, tied to some social actors and not others. They were (are) traditions for some, not for all, and so agreement about them is unavoidably tied to dominance within hegemony. The evocation of tradition by a society's dominant bloc always represents an attempt to ratify present social, political, and economic relations, processes, norms, and values. That selectivity makes traditions very powerful in social reproduction, but also points of contention:

> [Establishment and perpetuation of tradition] . . . is . . . at any time, a vulnerable process, since it has in practice to discard whole areas of significance, or reinterpret or dilute them, or convert them into forms which support or at least do not contradict the really important elements of the current hegemony. (Williams, 1978, p. 116)

A familiar U.S. example of the dominance and contestation that an analysis of traditions can reveal: Christmas and its observance. Claims of a "war on Christmas" and pleas to "put Christ back into Christmas" purport to defend American values and traditions. The selectivity of traditions is vulnerable to the real, historical record at all times, and this argument around "traditional" ways of observing Christmas in U.S. society is fraught with inaccuracy. The point here, however, is not accuracy or lack thereof; in analyzing hegemony, the more relevant questions are: whose interests (and access to/control of different kinds of resources) does the claim of "tradition" serve, what other versions of tradition does it counter, and how big of a risk to the dominant institutional configurations does the tradition (and counter-tradition) really pose?

Formations

Formations are movements and tendencies in society associated with some recognizable group, agent, or set of agents, either hegemonic (in support of existing social relations and authority over resources) or counter-hegemonic. Analyzing formations—and what they stand for and against, the institutional interrelationships they defend or attack, the traditions they invoke—helps us crystallize both the nature of dominance and the struggles against it. Formations can root themselves in the arts, sciences, the academy, philosophy, and in more obvious forms such as struggles over civil and women's rights. Formations are fundamentally about activity and action, about reinforcing or contending extant social agreements.

Temporality: Residualness, Emergence, Dominance

A very useful analytical procedure is to investigate residual and emergent institutions, traditions, and formations in the here and now. Hegemony works through incorporation rather than exclusion (for exclusion would trigger much more violent resistance). Residual elements are those pieces of the past that are ostensibly incorporated into the dominant even though, in many ways, they stand against the dominant organization of societal resources and power. They are, in other words, still active in the cultural process, part of the present, even though in most ways they have been supplanted or superseded. An example of residualness in the U.S. is the core narrative we have about rurality. It remains essential to the story we tell about ourselves but, in fact, public policy, our economic system, and culture privilege urbanity. "Family values" is another example of a residual phenomenon, as is "traditional marriage" or, perhaps best yet, "Main Street." These are all active traditions, and have institutions and formations associated with them. But in many ways, they are residual. Main Street does not drive economic decision-making, nor is Main Street connected politically and socially through interlocking institutions which might, following Bourdieu, allow the conversion of symbolic into economic capital. Analyzing how the residual is incorporated by reinterpretation, dilution, and partial exclusion is a powerful tool for making the selectivity of tradition visible. It also reveals areas of "human experience, aspiration, and achievement which the dominant culture neglects, undervalues, opposes, represses, or even cannot recognize" (Williams, 1978, p. 124).

If residual elements are about the *past*—what happened behind our backs when we were not looking—emergent elements relate to that which is excluded from the dominant *now*. Emergence in a hegemonic analysis is about opposition and contestation, efforts to alter the nature of dominance. Emergent traditions, institutions, and formations are very often defused and co-opted, partially incorporated into the dominant. Many see this kind of practice in the World Bank, which has become adept (according to its critics) at sponsoring and even publishing research and analysis that is critical of the Bank's practices, yet continues with those same practices. The (partial) incorporation of emergent formations allows the dominant institutional and resource architectures to remain largely the same, for the benefit of largely the same social actors. Analyzing emergence in hegemonic systems from the perspective not of win/lose, but of what kinds of reactions have been provoked, by whom, and with what results, can tell us a great deal about social change, and the directions in which it may go. Figure 3 schematizes the analysis of hegemony.
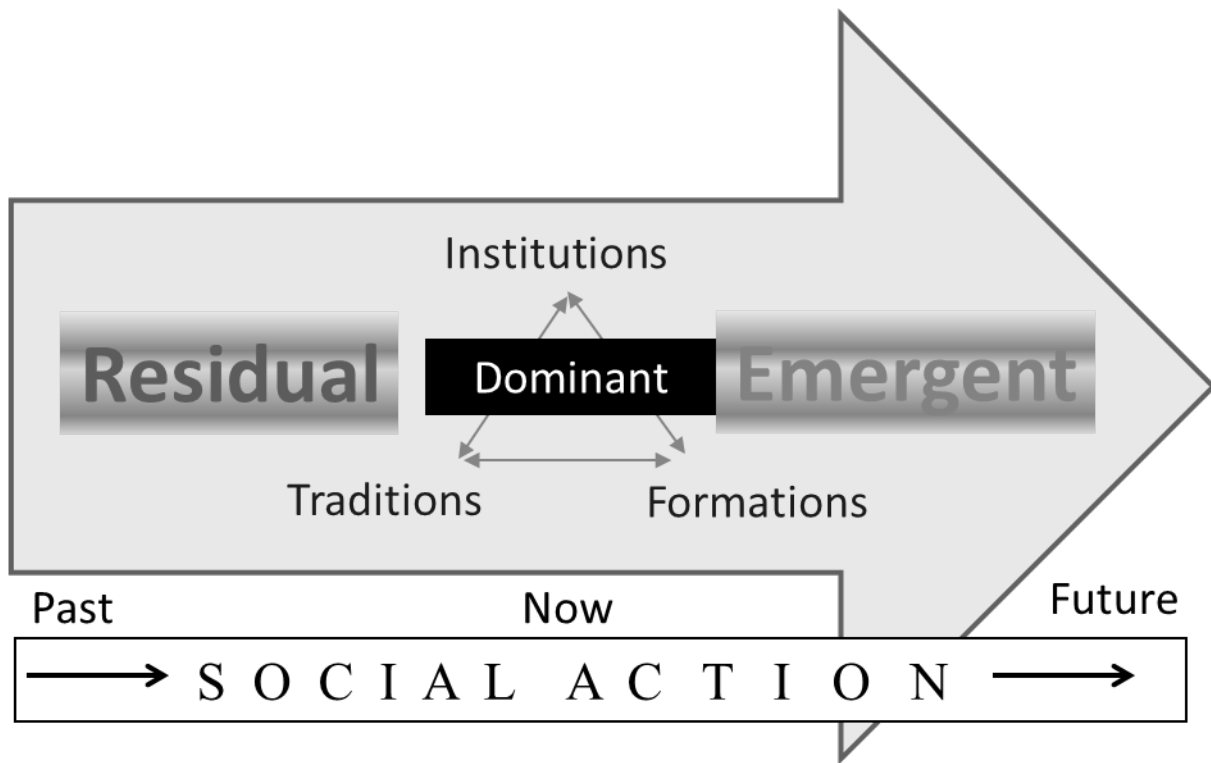
Figure 3. **Social action in hegemonic systems.**

With this, the Dilettante's Framework is nearly complete. Missing, however, is an explicit set of ideas about what power is and means, and how it works. An understanding of chutes, ladders, and social tectonics is greatly compromised without an explicit operationalization of power.

Bringing Power into the Picture

Much of what has been discussed to this point is related to power. But we need to be precise about what we mean by power. And we need to get beyond the commonsense way of understanding of power as merely a coercive force, an ability of one agent to achieve something even against the resistance of others. Power is both more complicated and more interesting.

As Foucault (1982) explains, power as either overt coercion or as punishment is very costly for dominant coalitions. He points us, instead, to power as a positive force. Power accomplishes useful things for society; it is necessary and productive. And power works best— for the dominant—not through physical force but, rather through the capacity "to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 221). Power, it follows, is relational and an important *shared social achievement.* In this sense, all agents participate in the production of power relationships. In being a social achievement, power is associated with making things

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sayable or unsayable, discussible or undiscussible, and, perhaps more controversially, thinkable or unthinkable.[58] Understood this way, power connects hegemony and structuration theory. It "is not simply . . . the ability of one person to realize claims made upon another" (Wolf, 2001, p. 375). Instead, "We are dealing with structural power, with abilities that flow from positions in a set of relations, positions that are strategically endowed with the power to control behavior by governing access to natural and social resources" (Wolf, 2001, p. 375).

Building on the work of Wolf, Foucault, and others, activists and engaged academics have developed an approach to understanding how power works.[59] First, power is broken into two categories: personal and interpersonal. Personal power refers to an individual's ability to know and pursue his or her interests. Interpersonal power refers to the ability to join with others, and the Weberian ability to coerce others and/or achieve personal (or group) interests even against the wishes of others. In this paper, I am interested in and limit myself to this latter category, which VeneKlasen and Miller (2007) term "power over."

"Power over" is not a monolithic phenomenon, and this leads to very useful analytical procedures if we wish to understand chutes, ladders and slow tectonics. It is composed of three kinds of power:

1. *Visible*: Formal/public forms, rules, and processes governing interpersonal processes. Examples of visible "power over" include laws, policies, etiquette, rules, and organizational procedures. Visible power is not limited to states, bureaucracies, organizations, or other macro social structures. Visible power is also evident in families, clubs, associations, neighborhoods, and communities.

2. *Hidden*: Hidden "power over" determines which agents/agendas become part of the interpersonal process. It is the ability to control (often behind the scenes) the settings in which agents interact. Hidden "power over" can be understood as a kind of gatekeeper of the publicly (or privately) discussible or broachable. It is, in most respects, conscious and consciously used by the dominant. Examples of it include: who gets invited to meetings or decision-making venues? Which (and whose) questions get taken in press conferences? What classes, on what themes/topics, are taught in University X's economics program or business school? Much of hidden "power over" is related to the control and management of Williams' residual and emergent elements.

3. *Invisible*: Invisible "power over" defines the very field of the "possible," the "reasonable," or the "logical." It aligns with Williams' notion of hegemony, and the idea that hegemonic formations are the result of much that is inadvertent, or unthought, or unplanned, working in what Giddens calls the practical consciousness of agents. John Gaventa's thinking about invisible power takes this further, and

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[58] "Unthinkable" in this context should be understood loosely. In some sense, any person can think anything. "Not often thought of" or "really hard to think like that" might better capture the meaning.

[59] The following passage is drawn from a number of existing sources, but three are worth mentioning: Lukes (1974), Just Associates (2007), and the large group of scholars and development practitioners who have congregated around an analytical tool called the "Power Cube," available at www.powercube.net.

describes invisible "power over" as (1) internalization of powerlessness, and (2) the enactment of existing social norms by the more and less powerful alike, in largely unthinking and unplanned manners. A useful and clear example of invisible "power over" is scientific paradigms. A scientific paradigm constitutes a particular way of seeing that is guarded through peer review, perpetuated through undergraduate and graduate curricula, reinforced through rewards of grant money and individual honors, and perhaps even patrolled by a legal apparatus. Another well-known phenomenon that reveals invisible power is the limiting of personal expectations by victims of institutionalized discrimination. In this case, the agent him or herself, as well as those around the agent, internalize limitations through socialization.

Conceptualizing power in this way—and framing power as ongoing social relationships rather than a "thing" that is wielded like a club—gives us additional and useful analytical tools for understanding social change. Power understood in such a manner makes us ask different kinds of questions and seek different kinds of evidence and facts. It provides a different lens through which we can make sense of what we see. The next section is devoted to making these questions explicit.

Putting the Dilettante's Framework to Work

The framework is at its most useful when applied with historical depth; looking across several decades is needed. It also helps to tap a variety of disciplinary expertise, and to professionally facilitate that dialogue. Finally, the framework is most useful when it supplements—rather than replaces—mainstream analytical tools for macroeconomic, political, and social trends and structural realities. It helps reframe data from this standard toolkit, enabling social change agents to imagine alternative strategies.

Table 1 lists useful questions linked to each component of the framework. The questions connect to the overall purpose to which I have generally used the framework: understanding and altering structures and patterns of injustice, marginalization, and exclusion. The list of questions would differ significantly were one to use the framework for other purposes.

My intent with the list is to give future users of the framework a starting point. In practice, when I work development professionals through this framework, I use it loosely and intuitively rather than as a check-box exercise. The framework is also best when it becomes the consistent lens through which activists and change agents continuously think about, review, and rethink their work. If it is used merely to take a "snapshot," it is less likely to be helpful.

In addition, three overarching questions to this frame are provocative, and will lead to new insights:

1. What has stayed the same for quite some time?
2. What would have to happen for this (community, region, nation, and people) to fall apart within five years?

3. What would have to happen in this community/region/nation/people for existing powerful and less powerful strata to largely reverse positions within the next 20 years?[60]

These are counterfactual questions, infrequently asked in social analysis. The value of the overarching framing questions is not to find a right answer. Rather, the value lies in what an interdisciplinary inquiry process reveals about hegemony. In the next section, I return to Mali and the Pondori plain to show what the answers to some of these questions reveal about chutes, ladders, and social tectonics.

Table 1

Dilettante's Framework: Key Questions

Elements of the Framework	Questions	Sub-Questions
Resources	How much do agents straddle the authority over political, economic, social, and symbolic capital?	What *traditions* justify this arrangement and *whose traditions* are they?
		What *institutional configurations* support these allocations?
	What are the most important forms of symbolic and social capital in this context?	Which agents accumulate different forms of symbolic and social capital?
		How do they make use of it?
		Are there barriers to entry regarding symbolic and social capital, barriers similar to that which we commonly find in political and economic domains?
	Who is wealthiest, related to different forms of capital?	How do they exchange their wealth in one domain for wealth in another?
		Which actors and institutional configurations support this?
Agents	Which agents are inside and outside of the dominant institutional formation?	What "rules of the game" make this seem natural, normal?
		How does this contribute to social cohesion/continuity? Conflict?

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[60] The purpose of this question is not to suggest that such a social upheaval is possible. Rather, it is meant to push our thinking in a direction that allows us to probe more deeply into the nature of social structure, institutions, and processes of hegemony.

Dilettante's Framework: Key Questions (Continued)

Elements of the Framework	Questions	Sub-Questions
	What strategies are available to agents who are poorer in the different forms of capital?	Where do they turn in times of crisis?
Sticky (cognitive) "rules of the game"	What are basic assumptions about the legitimacy of different social agents to accumulate and control different kinds of capital?	Who is excluded from kinds of capital? What "rules of the game" make this seem natural, normal?
	What is a "good" _____? (fill in the blank with different categories of agent: woman, girl, father, farmer, journalist, chief, etc.)	What traditions are related to this? What are the penalties for being "bad"? What does an actor do to recover?
	What unspoken, unthought "rules of the game" exist about how social change is supposed to happen?	Which actors do these rules seem to favor? How? Which forms of capital are given more weight?
Institutions	What are the most important institutions for the maintenance of the status quo?	What is the nature of their inter-relationships?
Formations	What aspects of the dominant are being challenged, and by whom?	What is the relationship of these formations to existing (1) institutions, and (2) authority over different kinds of capital? Why aren't *other* aspects of the dominant being challenged?
	What aspects of the dominant are being actively advocated for, and by whom?	What is the perceived threat (that is requiring overt reproduction of extant relationships)? Why is it threatening, and to whom, specifically?
	What are the most important ways that individuals connect with one another to form larger social groups?	Which of these social groups are counter-hegemonic? Which support the current hegemony?
Traditions	What are the ten most common elements of "the story we tell about ourselves"?	What aspects of actual society are left out of the story? Which agents and institutions are related to this exclusion? How do these narratives reinforce existing distributions of and authority over various forms of capital?

Elements of the Framework	Questions	Sub-Questions
Residualness	What factual discrepancies exist between empirical reality and what leaders claim is true about national (regional, community, ethnic, etc.) character, characteristics, traditions, institutions, or norms?	What contribution to social cohesion or conflict do these (false) claims make? Which institutions, traditions, and formations are on the decline?
Emergence	What institutions and institutional configurations are under strongest attack?	Which agents and formations are associated with this? How long has the attack been going on? What is happening in the arts in terms of popular themes, practices, and ideas?
Visible power	Which institutions are most/least trusted to deploy formal power?	What do these levels of trust suggest about emergent formations, new institutional configurations, and changing traditions?
Hidden power	For each kind of capital: how are public agendas managed, controlled, and shaped?	Which agents, formations, and institutions are involved in exercising hidden power? Which agents, formations, and institutions are trying to make the hidden visible? Specifically, what aspects of the hidden are being addressed?
Invisible power	What kind of behavior leads to social ostracism?	What are society's most important taboos? What parts of society are under-represented in popular media? What kinds of formal, legal punishment are unique to the context?
	What kinds of biases toward outsiders does the dominant formation deploy?	What "rules of the game" make this seem normal?
	What are the assumed characteristics of an ideal citizen, or ethnic group member, or member of a religion?	How do these characteristics get used by those with visible forms of power?
	What is the nature of authority over resources in the intimate sphere of the family?	How does this relate to social cohesion, continuity, and conflict?

**Using the Dilettante's Framework to Understand Chutes, Ladders, and Mali
In the Early Twenty-First Century**

Recall that there were two contradictory shifts in Mali in the 1990s and mid-2000s:

1. Nationally, a decade of multi-party democratization captured the attention of outsiders as a model change process, one that ostensibly was creating a more just society for citizens long oppressed by a military dictator. Parties arose by the scores and the media was liberalized. Yet by 2002, Mali's third post-dictatorship presidential elections were won by a candidate largely dismissive of multi-partyism, and whose career was that of an army general, just like the overthrown dictator Moussa Traoré. Malian civil society, scholars, and small party leaders began arguing that the control of resources, opportunity, access, and social capital was unchanged from 1970s and 1980s. In the language of this paper, Mali climbed a ladder, then slid down a chute.

2. Meanwhile, in remote Pondori, the arrival of multi-party democracy had brought little fervent action. The change was perceived by many as identical to efforts by outsiders—over more than 200 years—to intervene in local power structures, and it would fail like them. Yet beneath this seeming stability and continuity, a profound reordering of Pondori power and resources was feared by local elders. But no chute. No ladder. Just, on the surface, the slow usual grind of social tectonics.

Underpinning both of these processes is a deep "rule of the game" in Mali that certain kinds of agents are meant—allowed—to do and be certain things. There are "noble" clans, meant to rule. Other clans and families are meant to narrate oral history, and therefore possess the power of historical interpretation. This balances the power of nobles, for historians can—and do—exercise great verbal nuance in the telling of history, depending upon the behavior of nobles. Other clans and families are associated with supernatural or spiritual powers that serve to balance and control the (understood) megalomaniacal tendencies of noble leaders. Others are meant to be people of commerce and trade. Within the domain of natural capital (land, water, and pasture) still different families/clans are thought to be the proper authorities, but are often not the same as those who possess political capital and authority, or economic capital. These "rules of the game" have been codified into a *tradition* of consensus, in which a public belief that "all villagers" have agreed on a course of action is fundamental to social cohesion, reproduction, and indeed basic survival in rural areas like Pondori. Malians' self-image of being consensus-based, of valuing the collective over the individual, is as strong as Americans' self-image of rugged individualism, of the lone actor who overcomes all odds and produces positive change for all. Because consensus risks being false, consensus management in Mali is considered an exquisitely difficult skill, and is left to the most experienced *men*—the agents accorded legitimacy—to enact.

Another *tradition* is that of reciprocity, tied to *institutions* of vertical patron-client networks. The powerful and wealthy require a certain kind of *agent*—a client—to maintain their positions. Their positions, in turn, allow them to accumulate economic and political capital, and this capital must be redistributed to clients to ensure their future patronage.

Patron-client networks have existed in Mali for a thousand years or more. Their particular form within the nation-state is new, however, and the *social formation* has changed its shape. Most important here is the gravity of the nation-state's capital city, Bamako, which has increasingly attracted wealth and power since independence. By the late 1980s, traditional rural leaders had carefully cultivated relationships with patrons close to (national) political and economic power. These ties actually worked to curb the worst abuses of these unelected patrons under a military dictatorship, put checks on the dictatorship itself, and served to redistribute resources to rural areas that otherwise might have been completely excluded.[61]

This division of labor and capital, patrimonialism, and balance of difference kinds of power is, in fact, a practical solution to living in a relatively harsh physical environment. In this context, power is shared and divided among a large number of actors so that no single actor can deny another of the basic *resources* of life: land, water, labor, mates, and children. Those with political capital are subject to the power of those with symbolic capital (connection to spiritual forces that can be called down upon those politically powerful), and to those with economic capital. In the Pondori plain, village chiefs—with absolute power over the allocation of land to families and newcomers—can be among the poorest (economically) in the community.

Much more about the Malian context could be revealed with a more in-depth application of the framework. But this sketch allows us to do some useful analysis. While the 1990s national-level democratic processes put in place procedures that looked like democracy in the West, the most essential institution at the heart of such democracy, the self-actualizing individual, was not a legitimate *agent* in Mali. The economic rules and assumptions underpinning neoliberal free market reform could also be enacted for a brief exciting moment: a ladder. But the idea that highly competent actors could amass great pools of economic capital, and sit on them without redistribution, activated deep taboos about overconcentration of resources. Elections and parliaments made decision-making power over society's resources into a contest, empowering agents that few Malians would actually agree should be making important decisions. As this reality sunk in, the campaign of Touré in 2002 made tremendous social sense: he took the politics out of elections, and subsequently shaped his parliament in ways that the dominant formation's tradition of *consensus* could recognize. In the end—at least from the perspective of foreign analysts and not a small part of Mali's intelligentsia—the national story is of a momentous ladder, followed by a less precipitous chute, leaving Malian society modestly worse off than it was in the early 1990s but incrementally better off than during the preceding 23 years of dictatorship.

In Pondori, meanwhile, behind seeming stasis, things risked radical reconfiguration. Under the new rules of democratic decentralization, power over resources could be increasingly concentrated in the same agents. Prior to democratization and the elected local councils, Pondori was a network of agents, each legitimized to make allocative decisions over different resources. Fishers controlled access to the river and ponds; pastoralists controlled animal corridors and

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[61] Indeed, people of Mali's extreme north were largely excluded. They were accorded their own political region in the process of democratic decentralization in the 1990s and the region continues to be politically volatile in 2012. Northerners are a clear counter-hegemonic formation, replete with their own traditions, rules of the game, and "normal" ways to manage the authority over resources.

forage lands; and sedentary farmers controlled farmland. Alongside this set of powers were three others. First, village chiefs helped mediate differences between fishers, pastoralists, and farmers, and exerted control over village labor. Second, *marabouts* straddled the worlds of Islam and the esoteric, mediating in important ways the relationships between people and the supernatural. Third, leaders of *kabilabaw*, or clans of clans, exerted authority over members' behaviors and contributions to village solidarity.

Local elections resulted in certain clans co-opting the leadership of the new, nationally mandated commune councils. These clans gained access to formal political capital, which in turn gave them new forms of authority over land, water, pasture, and people. Previously, those with authority over these vital resources had been subject to social controls, enacted informally through longstanding traditions, "rules of the game," and social formations. Of greatest concern locally was the new conflation of formal political power, the elected councils, with clans who were thought to control the supernatural world. These two domains of power and capital had been brought together only once before, according to local legend: in the 1920s and 1930s, under colonial rule. During the late 1990s election campaign for village councils, elders resurfaced and used the episode as a cautionary tale. It was an intelligent use of a *residual tradition*—magic, the supernatural—that served to starkly define the more *emergent formations* that came with democratization.

Throughout the period 1999–2001, the dominant Pondori coalition selectively deployed tradition in a variety of other ways. Restricted access to the flood plain of some villages was said to be traditional in years of low water. This appropriation of tradition was, of course, contested, a good example of how selective use of tradition reveals the fragility and fissures inherent in any hegemonic formation. Labor was requisitioned for "public works" that served only to enrich the dominant coalition, and once again contestation broke out over how "traditional" this was. Village council (elected) members—like politicians everywhere—met outside formal arenas, bringing in powerful contacts from Bamako. Hence, a "hegemonic formation" began to emerge, seeking to justify in any number of ways 1) the fact that nothing really had changed vis-à-vis allocation and control of resources, and 2) the straddling of social, political, symbolic, and economic sectors. Members of the dominant social formation were aided in this by elected council members from families with no social legitimacy to make decisions about public goods.

The incantation "nothing's really changing" served as both a badge of honor for local leaders—who used it to underscore how little any invading entity had been able to gain a foothold despite centuries of effort—and a very useful screen that obscured their coercive *power over* moves. What is important here is that, in many ways, members of this dominant social formation truly believed that "nothing's really changing.. They saw their actions as almost heroic, protective of Pondori society. They were, in some ways, victims of structuration, too.

This was the danger which the elder I spoke to pointed out that morning in 2011. Power over resources is dangerous, he was saying. It requires careful and constant checks and balances, and it must be entrusted not to the highest bidder but, rather, to agents who have devoted themselves to understanding it, respecting it, and carefully channeling it through consensus processes. And, like Foucault, he was arguing that power is a good thing, a useful and necessary

thing in human society, a productive force. It was not something to be entrusted to novices, not something to rotate among the highest bidders, or best talkers.

Conclusion

The chutes, ladders, and slow social tectonics of Pondori may not be as dramatic as the Rwanda genocide, the utterly unforeseen instant peace that took hold in Mozambique in 1993, or the complex emergence of South Africa as a conflicted continental power. Still, the explanatory value of the Dilettante's Framework, I hope, comes through. It is founded on—indeed, assumes—that more often than not, things stay predominantly the same when it comes to social life. This is something, however, *to be explained.* The framework does not give answers but, rather, focuses on questions—and counterfactual inquiry—frequently ignored by more mainstream forms of social, political, and economic analysis. The framework is an argument, too. It argues that culture matters deeply and warrants much closer attention if we wish to foster more equitable, just, socioeconomic progress. It argues that power is a productive and necessary force that produces social stability and continuity, and that all agents are implicated and participate in this production. It argues, too, that much of the most interesting social change happens behind the attention garnered by chutes and ladders—if we learn to see it.

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Chapter 18

Sociocultural Systems Anthology: Conclusion

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Sociocultural systems are living embodiments of complex human systems, and to study them is to see the world in a new way. They can be used to frame problems that cross borders and involve whole regions, or to study particular issues, such as gender, land, or displaced persons. Understanding sociocultural systems involves taking a "macro" perspective of culture and people. These systems are not synonymous with nation-states, and where they begin and end is to some degree based on the judgment of the analyst. Their borders are by nature open, and it is only through an intentional conceptual process that a sociocultural system is delimited and defined. As Magnarella writes:

> A nuclear family, a peasant village, a single or a group of hunting and gathering bands, a city, a nation-state, an international alliance, countries of the earth, or any set of people with some common connection that a researcher chooses as a unit of analysis can be effectively conceptualized as a sociocultural system. (1993, p. 4)

Each system interacts with other systems, so it can be more helpful to think of "interfaces" between systems than to talk about "boundaries" (Magnarella, 1993). Understanding how to interact cross-culturally at the individual and community level is excellent preparation for working on broader macro-systems issues. The former has more flexibility – every person and community is unique in some ways – while the latter requires understanding that many systems are vast and often consist of longstanding networks of relationships that can be stubbornly resistant to change. As Gharajedaghi observes, "Sociocultural systems manifest greater inertia and resistance to change than do their individual members" (1993, p. 85).

The authors of this anthology have sought to shed light on the nature of sociocultural systems without rendering them less complex than they are. The authors agree that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to learn about and hold in mind all of the *relationships among elements* that collectively make up a sociocultural system. This interdisciplinary anthology offers a multitude of vantage points to understand sociocultural systems for military leaders who seek to learn more about such systems. This anthology includes strategies for understanding a system's dynamics from different professional perspectives, such as political science, anthropology, and psychology, and offers insight into how to work with specific problems within a given system, such as insurgency, internally displaced persons, or allocating a natural resource.

This concluding chapter will synthesize some of the ideas presented by the authors, especially areas of concurrence about sociocultural systems. The authors explore both the theoretical and applied aspects of working with sociocultural systems, including issues relevant to influence, change, and ethics as they relate to individuals or groups who are not core members

of a given sociocultural system, whether military, governmental, or nongovernmental. This conclusion also includes a brief section on strategies for accessing the U.S.'s own sociocultural systems-driven thinking orientations so that we can better understand the sociocultural systems-related perspectives of others. Finally, there is a short section on directions for future research.

Sociocultural Systems Theory and Systems Thinking

There are multiple ways of defining and discussing sociocultural systems. Sometimes the term is parsed into three components and analyzed as their confluence: socio + cultural + systems. Systems are a bundle of relationships among the parts of a system. In the case of sociocultural systems, the parts are social and cultural in nature, often including cultural practices and beliefs, population, physical/material things within the system, dynamics of social organization, and institutions. The "cultural" part of *sociocultural* has been extremely important to military operations in recent decades. Wunderle (2006) defines *culture* as a:

> . . . shared set of traditions, belief systems, and behaviors. Culture evolves in response to
> various pressures and influences and is learned through socialization; it is not inherent. In short,
> a culture provides a lens through which its members see and understand the world. (p. 9)

Another view is that culture is shared, adaptive, and transmitted through the generations of a given people or region (Triandis, 1994). A human materialist perspective views people as generally acting on behalf of their own well-being and trying to maximize the benefits available to them in their society, whether material, relational, or spiritual (Magnarella, 1993). Human behavior may not always seem rational, but it is based on states of mind, values, and desires. Underneath human behavior is a kind of "deep structure," defined as the set of fundamental choices made by members of a system about how their society will be organized and what basic activities will sustain it and ensure its survival (Gersick, 1991). These deep structures tend to be stable and resistant to change, since they are linked to basic survival of individuals and the system itself.

Sociocultural Systems Thinking

How can we begin to think about something as complex as a sociocultural system? Gharajedaghi urges those seeking to develop skills in systems thinking to try to think in terms of interdependent (rather than independent) sets of variables.[62] Above all, he encourages thinking about *the assumptions made by internal and external actors about the nature of the interrelationships among all of its elements*. For example, the interrelationships may be between aspects of the economy, political structure, geographical terrain, historical experiences, tribal groups, and so forth. Assumptions about these interrelationships create a system of meanings which are held in common to a large degree by the people who share membership in the system. For instance, farmers have procedural and communication norms they share, as well as shared ethics about how to treat one another. Another way to conceptualize these systems is as networks, with links that connect nodes or hubs. In analyzing networks, leaders can think of "the

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[62] Gharajedaghi encourages readers of this anthology to read his chapter three times in order to fully understand it, as it is the culmination of decades of refining his thinking on the topic.

number of links connecting one node to other nodes, the strength of those links, and the direction(s) of influence" (Chao & Moon, 2005, p. 1135).

The Shared Purposefulness and Self-image of a Sociocultural System

As Gharajedaghi indicates, the "lens" through which people see themselves and their world has changed dramatically over the centuries. He argues that the Industrial Age was mechanistic – focused on how to make machines run, and how to make humans efficient and machine-like – and that the age of sociocultural systems requires awareness that such systems are by nature multi-minded, open and unbounded, counterintuitive in their behavior and, above all, *purposeful*. Gharajedaghi defines a sociocultural system as "a voluntary association of purposeful members who have a choice.... They get together to serve their own purpose" (Chapter 1, p. 2). By *purpose* he means not only having the desire to work to produce an outcome, but having the ability to produce different outcomes (Gharajedaghi, 1993).

From the U.S. military perspective, the purposes operating in a given sociocultural system are often complex and sometimes confounding. When conflicts arise, they may be perceived as ambiguous, unpredictable, multi-dimensional, and ill-defined (Chiarelli & Smith, 2007). Military leaders can best work in such difficult conceptual terrain by being what former Secretary of the Army Francis J. Harvey describes as "decisive, innovative, adaptive, culturally astute, effective communicators and dedicated to life-long learning" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006b, p. 7-1). Life-long learning should encompass the notion that individuals within a system cannot be assigned monolithic natures or identities. Each individual belongs to various communities and has a plural identity. Like every sociocultural system, every individual is a mosaic of interconnected dynamics (see Sen, 2002).

Exploring the shared purposes that bind together members of sociocultural systems is a useful exercise, and several of the anthology's authors (e.g., Moaddel, Shahrani, and Iqbal) encourage including a historical perspective in this exercise. In contrast, Smith warns against excessive historical analogizing, as contexts that might appear similar can have deeply different underpinnings. Also, history, while providing important contextual information and insights about sociocultural systems, cannot reveal future events. In a sense, the authors suggest posing a question different from "What does history in a region tell us?" Instead, the authors suggest leaders consider the following question: What has worked (and not worked) in a sociocultural system in terms of successful (or thwarted) efforts at change, and why was the outcome as it was (see Glenzer, Chapter 17)?

The Impact of Foreign Military

When considering the impact of the U.S. military on a foreign sociocultural system, the authors recommend military personnel consider multiple hypotheses and seek confirming and disconfirming evidence to reject flawed hypotheses and build better hypotheses. To do this well, military leaders need to be able to engage in complex thinking, which includes thinking broadly about both positive and problematic dynamics operating in a system, and their possible causes and remedies. As Abbe, Gulick and Herman (2007) point out, narrow thinking – where there is little variability or breadth – can lead to negative attributions and bias, whereas broad thinking

leads to consideration of a number of options and a more careful approach to drawing conclusions. This kind of thinking helps a great deal when leaders' expectations are violated, the situation is counterintuitive, or they are faced with a paradox (Osland & Bird, 2000).

Though a foreign military may become part of a sociocultural system, a marked gap often exists between the assumptions of indigenous people and people who arrive from afar and were educated in a different cultural system. The key point is that the indigenous members of a sociocultural system together create a "shared image" of the sociocultural system in which they are all participating (Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1). This shared image is in effect their culture, which is based on values, ideas, and perceptions developed through a long history of shared experiences that govern how things are done (Gharajedaghi, 1993). For those who join a sociocultural system through military work, emigration, or other means, the process of learning about the gap between their assumptions and those held by indigenous members is crucial and, in many ways, unending. If that gap is not acknowledged, misunderstandings are likely to occur. Communication and achieving true understanding are difficult goals that require a great deal of attention. For instance, military advisors surveyed after working in Iraq and Afghanistan concluded that working skillfully with an interpreter and being adept at decoding nonverbal behavior were crucial to their success. They also reported that two aspects of impression management – establishing credibility and being a positive role model – made a difference between successful and unsuccessful cross-cultural performance (Ramsden Zbylut, Metcalf, McGowan, Beemer, Brunner & Vowels, 2009). In order to succeed at these communication and impression management skills, advisors had to understand how Iraqis and Afghans saw the world.

Understanding an Unfamiliar Sociocultural System

Acquiring a sense of the larger context of a sociocultural system is an important first step toward sociocultural systems thinking. Gharajedaghi (Chapter 1) recommends taking steps to understand the *environment of a system.* Among other things, understanding the environment of a system means working to see the system's multidimensionality, accept that contradictions and tensions are inherent in its nature, and avoid the "dualistic fallacy" of classifying things in terms of binary oppositions (Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1). Sometimes in Western analytic thinking, there is a tendency toward thinking in binarisms (e.g., one who is traditional cannot also be modern; an individual who is a bad element cannot simultaneously be a good element; if there is a self, there must be an "other"), but this can lead to zero-sum thinking wherein benefits for someone are seen as losses for someone else (Wolf, Chapter 12). An example of such thinking might be that where there is conflict, there is not also cooperation. The reality may be more complex, however.

For anyone seeking to understand one's own or another cultural system, it is important to hold in mind that such systems are full of tensions, contradictions, and competing values (see chapters from Gharajedaghi, Moaddel, and Glenzer). While a nation-state can have political problems or social unrest (e.g., Glenzer, Chapter 17; Shahrani, Chapter 13; Van Arsdale, Chapter 14), it is nonetheless the embodiment of a vast social contract (e.g., Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1; Glenzer, Chapter 17). There are ongoing discursive and other struggles being enacted, though the degree of freedom to address and resolve issues publicly varies a great deal. However, even where some freedoms are curtailed, it is important to understand that human beings have agency. If military leaders believe that people's behavior is determined by sociocultural factors rather

than chosen, then the people are not allowed responsibility as agents of their own destinies (see Sen, 2005). And as Glenzer points out, a great deal of what goes on in a sociocultural system is a reflection of tacit social agreements (Chapter 17). Military leaders would be wise to keep in mind that, whenever they simplify their conceptualization of a sociocultural system in order to approach a specific problem, they have made a deliberate choice to overlook some aspects of the system's complexity to focus on specific factors, much as an astronomer studying our solar system might focus on a subset of planets. Nevertheless, a pragmatic approach to working within sociocultural systems requires focusing on elements relevant to the problem area, though this approach does not reveal an accurate depiction of the sociocultural system in its entirety. As Shahrani suggests in his chapter on political culture in Afghanistan (Chapter 13), military leaders and researchers can use a theoretical framework that requires focusing on a modest number of *key elements related to a specific question or problem*, and then analyze the dynamics among them. This is a way of narrowing the scope of a problem to more manageable proportions. For instance, to understand political culture in Afghanistan, Shahrani explores four factors: kinship, kingship, Islam, and the impact of foreign subsidies. This theoretical approach, detailed in his chapter, shows that there is never just one element responsible for a political or cultural dynamic.

One can therefore carve a subset of dynamics of interest in a sociocultural system and study the more circumscribed system. The question is how to identify the most salient elements, understand their interrelationships in the past, present, and possible future, look at how people in power impact them, and then hypothesize from this information. Shahrani describes sociocultural systems as composed of nested subsystems and topics. Military personnel can thus think in terms of units or parts of systems to study how several aspects of a sociocultural system interact. Shahrani urges thoughtful consideration of how to frame issues, asking whether the issue of women's roles, for instance, can be understood without also considering the issue of families (Chapter 13). When something unanticipated in the system happens, or plans and milestones do not unfold as envisioned, military leaders should consider how they originally defined the sociocultural system and evaluate whether they should incorporate additional elements or revise their sense of the relationships among elements. Likewise, leaders periodically should revisit their original conceptualizations of the sociocultural system as the problems they address evolve over the course of a deployment.

If even a simplified model of a sociocultural system at a given moment may be considered very complex, then the reality of a sociocultural system as it unfolds over time may indeed be cognitively unfathomable. The dynamics of sociocultural systems are always changing, and are often subtle, symbolic, or invisible. According to Lantolf (2000), who draws on theory by Vygotsky, the human mind is itself mediated, meaning that humans use symbolic tools and signs, such as language, as an interface between ourselves and our physical world. Appearances, as Van Arsdale, Corman, and Glenzer note, are not necessarily realities, especially to outside observers. It is thus crucially important to look beneath the surface of things and through indigenous lenses, insofar as possible, when engaged in sensemaking efforts. Wolf mentions four "macro" lenses for looking at the world: the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual (Chapter 12). He uses water as an illustration. For Palestinians, water is physical, related to the human need for survival. For Israelis, it is more of an intellectual issue. For the Hopi, it is spiritual. This last way of looking at water is very uncommon in the West, observes Wolf, where our optic is usually analytic and pragmatic. But if we cannot see entities and issues through the

eyes of much of the rest of the world, how can we hope to understand the sociocultural system as it truly is, and not as we wish it were or expect it to be?

This issue of how we perceive is profoundly important, and runs remarkably deep in cultures. For instance, Arabs and Westerners define their roles in their societies differently, reason differently, have very different senses of personal identity (whether independent or interdependent), and are likely to behave differently (Klein & Kuperman, 2008). Students of culture are often familiar with these ideas, but knowing something intellectually and being able to implement the knowledge in practical ways when working cross-culturally are different. How to give feedback or criticism to a person who holds honor and face-saving as supremely important is an acquired skill. "Decisiveness, a virtue in the West, may seem rude to Arabs. For them, a decision's value increases with the time spent making it," observe Klein and Kuperman (2008, p. 102). Similarly, in many cultures, the self simply does not stand alone. It is "self-in-relation-to-other," which has a deep impact on cognitions, emotions, and behaviors (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 225). This interconnectedness of the self is related to the interconnectedness of sociocultural systems. Thus, any impact on an individual or on other aspects of a sociocultural system is likely to have ripple effects.

Lenses for Looking at Sociocultural Systems

Through various lenses, the authors in the anthology look at numerous sociocultural systems, revealing a spectrum of relationships and issues connected like facets of luminous jewels. Some of the lenses are familiar (e.g., military, political, historical, psychological, and cultural), but are examined from new angles. Other lenses are less common and thus may provide additional ways of seeing (e.g., spiritual, natural resources, informal institutions, indigenous dispute resolution, and culturally unique allocations of power, rights and responsibilities). For instance, we need to look carefully at the issue of governance, of which formal government is often only one part. As Batson points out, if we judge a society by its formal institutions of governance or law, and do not consider or underestimate the presence and importance of less formalized means of governance, dispute resolution, or decision-making, we have failed to understand key aspects of that sociocultural system (Chapter 11). Other authors also note that non-state actors can be more important than formal government, and customary authority can be much more powerful than statutory authority (Batson, Chapter 11; Glenzer, Chapter 17; Van Arsdale, Chapter 14). The authors encourage us to consider issues related to land ownership, management, and use, including contested land and what it reveals about a sociocultural system. Because sociocultural systems are dynamic, living entities, we miss a great deal if we do not adopt an organic, historical view and consider how the systems have unfolded over time. This can mean looking at the sweep of evolution over hundreds or thousands of years.

The authors recognize that while there is no way to see through all of the possible lenses simultaneously, it is possible to internalize the knowledge that there is a vast complexity of interrelationships inherent in any sociocultural system and to remain aware that it is impossible to know them all. Conceptually, it is important to understand that a large sociocultural system is too vast and complex to be fully understood by anyone. However, from this understanding, leaders can identify a range of tools or strategies to address specific questions or problem areas. For instance, if leaders need to work on restoring roads in a given area, they can look to how the

roads have been used and by whom, how roads were damaged, who the local stakeholders are and how they are related to the roads and other relevant factors, such as markets, vehicles, gasoline, insurgent behavior, local government, and tribal relations. A range of factors should be considered in order to begin to understand the meaning of the road system to the local people and how different elements impact the roads. When this understanding is achieved, leaders can consider interventions and possible related orders of effects. Lenses for looking at and analyzing sociocultural systems addressed in this anthology include resources, property and heritage, gender and other population groupings, counterintuitive thinking, narrative, and cultural traits versus cultural processes.

Resources, Property and Heritage

In his chapter on water conflict and cooperation (Chapter 12), Wolf cites the historical dynamics of water management across sociocultural systems and clearly illustrates the common assumption that resource scarcity automatically results in conflict does not hold. Wolf's chapter offers interesting food for thought for military leaders. Specifically, conventional wisdom often accepted as ground truth may not be true and may preclude reaching solutions that can benefit a sociocultural system as a whole. In the case of water, this precious and limited resource has led to more cooperation than conflict, even across hostile borders (Gerlak, Heikkila, & Wolf, 2010). Why is this? In part, Wolf explains, it is because of how thinking about water issues has evolved, especially in less Western parts of the world. Instead of talking about legal and other kinds of rights, people in the global South and East are more likely to talk about the universal needs of living things. Instead of seeing resource allocation as a zero-sum game, some in the global South and East have been able to view water allocation and cooperation in terms of a "basket of benefits" that enhances the available resource through cooperation. Wolf and colleagues studying water issues note that there has been a great deal of cooperation among disparate entities around issues of water (Carius, Dabelko, & Wolf, 2004; Conca & Dabelko, 2002; Wolf, Kramer, Carius, & Dabelko, 2005).

Understanding what leads to cooperation where conflict is also a possibility may help illuminate other sociocultural systems-related issues (Zeitoun & Warner, 2006). As Glenzer argues, in many places, including Africa, there is a surprising amount of social stability. He asks, "Why does so much of social life stay the same from day to day? Why do we all seem to agree on so much? Why isn't there more conflict than there is?" (Chapter 17, p. 239). Because there are many possible views about any given issue or problem, it is beneficial to seek a plurality of relevant perspectives that may shed light on the subject. Each perspective can be seen as a kind of lens that illuminates certain aspects of a sociocultural system. In his exploration of issues related to property, for example, Demarest argues that property is ever so much more than land titles (Chapter 10). In fact, he turns popular notions of property upside down. Resources are not property, Demarest argues. Property is the *agreement* that governs relationships among people *and* between people and the natural or constructed worlds. Many societies do not have extensive formal land title systems, but their informal systems are very powerful, as are questions of how land (and things on and in land) is used and who has use rights. Much property is intangible; property includes access to events, information, and symbolic forms of power, such as invitations to dine with important people, the ability to participate in a ceremony, or the right to carry or wear culturally meaningful items in public. Much as Wolf portrays water as being both a

physical and symbolic entity, land too carries many physical and symbolic meanings. Both land and water require social agreements that connect people to one another and to the geographical terrain. Attending to the symbolic meanings inherent in sociocultural systems is extremely important in understanding the relationships that are the underpinnings of the system (see Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1).

According to Demarest, property reveals "the details of significant human relationships" and information about "power in time and space" (Chapter 10, p. 131). For example, a school is not an empty building. Rather, it is a set of relationships and responsibilities shared among a group of people. Demarest urges military leaders and others to learn about property dynamics (including attendant rights and responsibilities), as they reveal much about power and wealth. He paraphrases John Powelson (1988) on the subject of what happens when property is heavily disputed terrain in a sociocultural system: where there is no formal property system, there is usually no peace. If in a position to do so, military leaders can consider whether there is benefit in working with local people to develop more formalized property systems.

Even if more formalized property systems are warranted and feasible, it is important under all circumstances not to destroy informal systems that benefit a given society. Demarest urges military leaders to investigate and recognize property issues when they operate overseas. If military leaders do not heed this advice, they may create property-related conflict (and related violence) where it did not previously exist. One might ask why water appears to cause less conflict than land. Water travels in ways that land does not, and water is by its very nature and of necessity shared. It is renewable, falling as snow and rain, changing with the seasons, whereas land is more easily subject to subdivision, inheritance issues, and transfer of rights. Still, both water and land are subject to cultural beliefs and practices and should be considered as potentially important factors in the sociocultural system. For example, in the American West, there is plenty of litigation over water rights, so this might be a place where water causes as much conflict as does land. How power and resources are distributed have a lot to do with the physical and human terrain. As Glenzer points out when discussing the Pondori plain of Mali, the "division of labor and capital, patrimonialism, and balance of different kinds of power is, in fact, a practical solution to living in a relatively harsh physical environment. In this context, power is shared and divided among a large number of actors so that no single actor can deny another of the basic *resources* of life: land, water, labor, mates, and children" (Chapter 17, p. 250). Military leaders can look to how resources and power are distributed, and to what is valued in a sociocultural system, when appraising how to promote peace and stability there.

In the interest of promoting peace and cultural respect, Sands encourages attention to cultural heritage, whether monuments, libraries, natural features, art, or something else that constitutes a precious reflection of a culture's shared image of itself. In his chapter on cultural heritage (Chapter 9), Sands argues that heritage can teach military leaders a great deal about a culture in historical terms and in terms of what a culture values and why. As Lantolf observes, heritage is often modified as it is passed through the generations, as this is a way of "reworking... cultural inheritance to meet the needs of its communities and individuals" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 2). Ethically, the U.S. military and other forces making decisions that may put cultural heritage at risk have a responsibility to preserve and understand it, as heritage reveals identity formation, worldviews and enduring core beliefs (Sands, Chapter 9). Places and items considered to be

heritage are often also protected by law. Heritage has a strategic use for U.S. forces as well, Sands argues, because it can help illuminate what *motivates behaviors* within a sociocultural system. In addition, resources and their constraints are informative tools in exploring how a given sociocultural system functions, and how U.S. forces and members of a sociocultural system can beneficially interact. For instance, not adequately protecting certain important libraries during the early days of the invasion of Baghdad affected Iraqis' feelings about U.S. forces and catalyzed debate about the values and planning that informed the U.S. invasion (Bogdanos, 2006).

Gender and Other Population Groupings

Another lens through which one can analyze sociocultural systems is the characteristics and needs of a subgroup of the larger population. Because many sociocultural systems are comprised of overlapping and interactive groups, it is important to understand the relationships between the groups and to consider each group in regard to a number of other groups or issues. For instance, understanding the Pashtun tribe in Afghanistan requires understanding its relationships with other tribes, its history, and the roles it has played in the larger culture. In a similar vein, Brooks addresses gender as a sociocultural concept that influences identity, perceptions, and expectations (Chapter 15). Overlooking the needs or perspectives of women in conflict zones has proven to be counterproductive. Army counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine points out that "in traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. When women support COIN efforts, families support COIN efforts" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006a, p. A-35). Tinsley and Mayo's story about the ill-conceived well project in Iraq is an example of what can happen when gender considerations are ignored in a well-intended effort to help a community. Tinsley and Mayo explain that "the building of the well failed not because the village did not want a clean reliable water source, but rather because the project's advisors were blind to an existing sociocultural artifact (the women's social network) that was deeply cherished by members, as well as the sociocultural practices that supported the network and thus the sociocultural system (women's opportunity to get away from other obligations, socialize while walking, and share critical inter-family information)" (Chapter 4, p. 45). There is also a human rights component to attending to the needs of women. Research conducted in the aftermath of the Bosnian war showed that female refugees were more traumatized by the war then male refugees and yet were not receiving adequate mental health services (Vojvoda, Weine, McGlashan, Becker, & Southwick, 2008).

Women and men are often directed by their cultural norms to behave in different ways. As Glenzer states, "[M]ore subtle and far more pervasive in any society are the 'rules of the game' that structure what certain groups of people can do, be, or say. Again, simple examples abound: castes in India, women in Saudi Arabia" (Chapter 17, p. 236). Van Arsdale points out that it can be harder to understand the roles, relations to power, and social dynamics of women, as the case of the Sudanese Dinka tribe reveals (Chapter 14). Understanding requires more effort, but the stakes connected to that understanding are very high. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has urged military and other foreign forces to work to ensure participation of the least powerful groups in the process of planning and analysis of programs, especially regarding situations involving women and children (Van Arsdale, Chapter 14).

Including girls and women in education, economic activity, public discourse, and governance is very important in terms of formation of human capital and reducing negative outside influences. Women are often effective change agents and promoters of peace and stability. They have an established track record as a group likely to advocate for the interests of children and families, which in turn helps promote a more productive future for a sociocultural system. Understanding culture-specific and universal gender issues can be helpful in trying to understand why women and men in a given sociocultural system behave as they do. As with other sociocultural systems dynamics, gender is complex, fluid, and interconnected with a range of other sociocultural factors (Brooks, Chapter 15). Women often see issues differently from men, and have different kinds of influence. They can help modify or solidify the shared narrative, symbols, and images that are the backbone of sociocultural systems, but only if they are allowed agency and voice. As Brooks writes, "For military leaders, understanding how gender fits into the sociocultural system can have a tremendous impact on identifying underlying issues of conflict, productive problem resolutions, and steps to achieve sustainable stability" (Chapter 15, p. 207).

How women function in a given sociocultural system often depends on cultural issues. Internationally, there is heterogeneity in their positions, strategies, and attitudes. A community or culture will have its own interpretation of women's rights, influence, and agency, and there may be vast differences of opinion on these issues. It is thus important that efforts to include host nation women's participation in development, stability, or other efforts are handled with cultural sensitivity, and that the needs and perspectives of the men in regard to appropriate gender roles are considered. If it is to have a chance of success, any change process needs to be authentic to a sociocultural system, not a projection of the agenda of external influences.

Counterintuitive Thinking

Counterintuitive wisdom is an important theme of this anthology (see Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1). For instance, not only has water, in recent decades, produced more cooperation than conflict (see Wolf, Chapter 12), but overtly counterintuitive strategies for understanding sociocultural systems can be illuminating. Trofino discusses the nature of insurgencies and urges military and other leaders to invert conventional thinking (Chapter 8). Instead of looking at what insurgencies can do, she recommends analyzing what insurgencies cannot do. Especially in the context of asymmetrical military conflicts, she argues, it is important to study limitations of the insurgent group, since limitations may reveal vulnerability and internal struggle or stress. How can an insurgent group's areas of weakness (as opposed to strength) be understood and that knowledge exploited? How do insurgencies adapt to their situations and the challenges they face, and how can this knowledge inform responses to them? Van Arsdale asks how we can engage insurgents in dialogue so that we have direct understanding of their perspectives (Chapter 14).

Various authors note that our expectations may be overturned, and that counterintuitive events may instead come to pass. As Trofino asserts, leaders may misjudge an opponent or ally. They may even misjudge a state, imagining that because it is impoverished, it is also weak. Especially when considering how to influence or effect change, it is important to understand what about a state is strong, stable, or deeply traditional. In her chapter on Somali clan culture and Al Shabaab (Chapter 16), Iqbal explores why leaders' expectations or predictions may not

be fulfilled. For instance, many people have expected the insurgent group Al Shabaab to make significant inroads in Somalia, but the facts do not bear that out. Somalia is an example of a nation that is enigmatic to outsiders, and thus presents an excellent case study in not making assumptions without first carefully studying the system in question.

Iqbal's argument is that skillful observers should seek to understand *why* things are as they are. She offers the example of the frequent thwarting of external insurgent groups by Somali clans. Somalia is extremely clan-based, and the "reciprocal rights and obligations between kin and clans" are one of the most powerful dynamics in Somali society, as they govern property and political issues, family and domestic relations, natural resource use, and dispute resolution (Chapter 16, p. 221). Known as the *xeer* system, this set of clan-based dynamics is more powerful than Islamic or sharia law, and certainly more powerful than an outside insurgent effort, though clan leaders may choose to make deals with insurgent leaders when deemed a benefit to the clan. The chapters by Trofino, Iqbal, and Van Arsdale offer an important lesson: it is wise to be careful about making assumptions, as it is difficult to predict outcomes in a sociocultural system, and this difficulty is compounded when indigenous perspectives are not well understood. Understanding indigenous perspectives is likely to lead to "more sustainable and appropriate strategies for fostering human resource development and productivity" (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007, p. 498), and they help us see ourselves through the eyes of others.

Chapters by Cushner, Van Arsdale, and Iqbal reveal how important it is to understand the character of a sociocultural system, meaning its key values, practices, and tendencies. In the case of Somalia, Iqbal considers the following key national traits that help outsiders understand the cultural landscape: pride, consensus, needs-based (rather than ideology-based) perspectives, fairness/egalitarianism, negotiation orientation and, crucially, xenophobia. Finally, since the clan-based system in Somalia is not likely to go away, she recommends looking for the positive in it. She sees, for instance, that clans protect Somalis and that clan elders do a great deal to create law and order. Thus, any Western effort to dismantle or erode the clan system of Somalia risks damaging stability-creating institutions in that already politically fragile state. More generally, the lesson learned is that even though cultural dynamics – such as customary law or decision-making by jirgas – may sometimes seem problematic to Western military leaders, it is unwise to disrupt existing systems of decision-making, social organization, and justice without fully understanding potential implications.

The Power of Narrative

Corman's focus on narratives is an illuminating way to understand some of the more symbolic aspects of cultures. In his chapter on understanding sociocultural systems through their narratives, Corman indicates that narrative is *a system of stories* that can reveal a sociocultural system's identity, myths, themes, and archetypes (Chapter 6). Unlike heritage objects or sites that are visible, narratives often appear in intangible forms, such as on the radio or passed by word of mouth. Narratives may also be communicated through metaphors that stand in for a story or set of stories. An example is the American dream. Sometimes narratives, while informing understanding of issues, are not articulated at all. Military leaders seeking to understand what a culture's narratives reveal about that culture may want to consider two forms of narrative validity: coherence (how do the parts of the story or stories fit together to create

meaning?) and fidelity (is the story plausible, or is there something more symbolic afoot?). Truly understanding what a cultural narrative means to the people who subscribe to it can illuminate deeply-held values, attitudes, and goals. The co-existence of narratives and counter-narratives can reveal areas of political disagreement and potential unrest. Moaddel points out that the majority of political discourse in a nation-state is organized around people's ability to "reevaluate, revisit, or reject the claims, the arguments, and often the conceptual foundations of competing ideologies" (Chapter 7, p. 91).

Sometimes cultures have master narratives that are deeply rooted in their history and religion, as well as in beliefs, values, customs and traditional practices (Rentsch, Mot, & Abbe, 2009). Understanding these narratives can help military leaders improve their social perspective-taking skills. Key to this understanding is investigating who has the ability to create and disseminate specific cultural narratives. Another question is how the sociocultural system responds to circulating stories. Inertia in a given system may be manifested as a kind of filtering system whereby the culture's shared image rejects or accepts certain kinds of messages. "Those [messages] consistent with the image are absorbed and reinforced, while contradictory or antagonistic ones have no significant effect. This phenomenon... acts as a defense mechanism and structure-maintaining function" (Gharajedaghi, 1993, p. 75).

Military leaders should hold in mind that narratives are often woven from multiple cultural strands and can contain contradictory elements. When leaders carefully evaluate strands or versions of a given narrative, patterns are more likely to emerge. In other words, input from multiple sources coupled with skillful, broad-minded analysis is likely to lead to more nuanced and accurate conclusions (Browning & Boudès, 2005). When the U.S. military seeks to influence a sociocultural system, its Information Operations (U.S. Department of the Army, 2003) may offer alternative narratives, such as narratives about the benefits of Western democracy. As Information Operations Doctrine notes, "Truth is paramount. Successful and effective public relations depend on credibility..." (U.S. Department of the Army, 2003, p. 2-22). Further, "[i]t is crucial that foreign peoples are not deceived or lied to, and that such a perception is not created" (p. 2-22). This precept does not preclude using alternative narratives, such as narratives about the benefits of individual rights and freedoms. However, if those alternative narratives do not make sense to local people, the people will continue to adhere to more comfortable, familiar narratives.

To understand current, past, and wished-for (but not realized) cultural self-images, Corman and Glenzer suggest analyzing dominant stories circulating in cultures. Sometimes the stories were never actually true, but are kinds of cultural myths, and sometimes they once were true, but are now obsolete. Sometimes they have been true all along. The status of the story reveals much about its creators and propagators, frequently illuminating what the stories mean and how and why they came into existence. If the stories are obsolete – such as the notion that women are physically or morally incapable of performing certain tasks – it is useful to ask who is hanging onto them and why. Understanding how these ideas are used, even when outworn, can hint at future sociocultural systems change. Similarly, emerging narratives can predict the direction change may take. For instance, in U.S. culture, there are emerging narratives about the institution of marriage – what it means, who has the legal right to it, and why the U.S. needs or does not need/want it.

Traits and Processes

Underlying the narratives that circulate in a society are the orientations and problem-solving norms of a culture. These norms are often attributed to a set of traits – a given culture might, for instance, be described as tribal, traditional, and proud. Tempting as it may be to compile lists of cultural traits that characterize members of another sociocultural system, Van Arsdale argues that the trait-based approach is limited and ultimately not very helpful. It is more fruitful to understand relationships, cultural dynamics, intracultural and intercultural stress points, and adaptive strategies that people use when faced with crisis or hardship. In short, it is best to think in terms of *processes* rather than traits. Van Arsdale argues in his chapter on displaced populations that processes reveal how decisions are made and resources are allocated (Chapter 14). Abbe highlights another problem with a trait-based approach: it does not account for differences among individuals. And even if one were able to identify the traits of a given individual, traits are activated or repressed based on a given context and which aspect of cultural identity is most salient to that context (Abbe, 2008).

It can be useful to study the most fruitful and beneficial practices and processes in a given sociocultural system, rather than to focus unduly on problems and deficits. The goal is to marshal strengths to address challenges. In regard to improving social equality, it is worthwhile to analyze how to help create an environment that facilitates empowerment of the disempowered, whether they are internally displaced persons, women, children, or a given ethnic or religious group. Van Arsdale cites the example of the Dinka of South Sudan as a portrait of a population with several important strengths. If military leaders learn about justice, social networking, resource sharing, marriage, violence, and inter-ethnic processes related to the Dinka, they can learn a great deal about how their sociocultural system works and how best to work with the Dinka within it. In contrast, Glenzer (Chapter 17) advocates identifying historical inequities in sociocultural systems before engaging in efforts to create a more just distribution of resources and power. Sands (Chapter 9) would likely add that understanding what sorts of cultural heritage the Dinka or another group most value will support all of these efforts.

When analyzing cultural discourse, heritage, or behavior, it is easy to assume that we know things other people do not know, or that we know what is in the best interest of others. The inverse is also true; other people know things we do not, and other people's cultures have strengths that ours lacks. An example related to knowledge is that most people in the non-Western world can draw a diagram of the streams in their water basin, but most Americans cannot (Wolf, Chapter 12). What does this awareness of the routes of local waterways reveal about people in the non-Western world, how they think, and how they differ from people in many parts of the world? Understanding local perspectives enables leaders to take advantage of existing cultural knowledge and devise solutions that are consistent with the cultural landscape. In addition, making use of areas of strength is a good way to achieve local buy-in when addressing local problems.

Influence Efforts and Change

A number of authors in the anthology agree that the basic default values of a given sociocultural system are deeply rooted and often very hard to change, and that this can lead to

stasis in the system. Gharajedaghi notes that violating the sacred values of a sociocultural system can be punishable by death (Chapter 1). A system's deep attachment to its sacred values reveals why it is usually hard for most sociocultural systems to change, and even harder for an outside element to try to create change. The *shared collective image* held sacred by members of a sociocultural system must be altered for a cultural change to be accepted and to endure. This collective image is embodied in narratives (Corman), cultural processes (Van Arsdale), gender roles (Brooks), cultural orientation (Cushner), heritage (Sands), history (Shahrani), and political discourse (Moaddel). Those seeking to learn about sociocultural systems in the context of efforts directed at influence or change are urged to understand that while influence is possible, control is rarely attainable. For many operations (e.g., humanitarian assistance, governance, stability and support), military leaders are faced with a difficult challenge in determining how best to provide assistance to a host nation in a way that is meaningful, respectful, and culturally relevant.

A significant challenge with change efforts in sociocultural systems is that change in that context is by nature complex and has potentially unlimited ripple effects. The notion of a "wicked problem" is helpful because such problems have no clear "stopping point" and "no immediate and no ultimate test to a solution." Harder still, "[e]very wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem" (Lorentz, 2011, p. 7-9). There are many possible perspectives and possible solutions for these usually socially-rooted problems. Thus, those seeking to influence and catalyze change must proceed with caution and use iterative methods that continually loop back into insightful reassessments of causes and potential courses of action.

Pace and Scope of Change

There have been many theories of change in the biological and organizational worlds, ranging from Darwinian gradualism, a slow form of evolution, to theories of "sudden, revolutionary 'punctuations' of rapid change" (Gersick, 1991, p. 11). The latter paradigm is of interest because many nations have undergone periods of "equilibrium" and rarer, but marked "revolutionary periods" (Gersick, 1991, p. 13). The revolutionary period may be preceded by a "transition period" during which inertia in the system is interrupted and assumptions and relationships that have collectively created the "shared image" and the social status quo are re-evaluated. New ideas or frameworks may be introduced, and they may take hold quickly, especially as sometimes small changes can be amplified substantially (Plowman, Baker, Beck, Kulkarni, Solansky, & Travis, 2007). Consider the momentum of the falling of the Berlin wall and what came afterward in terms of the reunion of the two German nations (Gersick, 1991). More recently, we can note the contagious phenomenon of Arab Spring and the unpredictable and still unfolding events in Syria, Libya, and Egypt.

Change can also be looked at in terms of its *scope*. The status quo can be adapted or entirely replaced; when it is entirely replaced it is considered "frame-bending." Scope also refers to the degree to which change reaches the masses. If change efforts are to be undertaken, the change process needs to have sufficient participation and support of the local people. Activist Jawad Nabulsi explains the recent revolution in Egypt this way: "The silent majority started to sympathize with the protesters in Tahrir Square, and this is when you win. You just have to stand long enough so that the silent majority is on your side. But if you don't win the silent majority,

there won't be a tipping point. You won't effect change" (Schiffrin & Kircher-Allen, 2012, p. 34). Often, it takes the right kind of leaders and communication – the internet is a huge asset to change efforts – to gather the momentum that leads to what Malcolm Gladwell calls "the tipping point" (2002, p. 7) and Chao and Moon call a "critical threshold" (2005, p. 1136). Up to that point, there can be a great deal of individual and group resistance.

Resistance to and Capacity for Change

As Gharajedaghi expresses, "Fear of rejection and a strong tendency toward conformity among members of a social system are important obstructions to social change" (1999, p. 105). Glenzer refers to the "stickiness" of institutions, which can lead to stasis and maintenance of the status quo. "The stickiness of institutions—the rules of the game—is fundamental to the survival of human groups. It is for good reason that, once established, the rules are very, very difficult to change. Stickiness is reinforced by the reflexive relationships between authority over resources and the social order: people and groups almost never willingly give up what they possess or control for some idea of the greater good" (Glenzer, Chapter 17, p. 237). This echoes Magnarella's (1993) view of human materialism and Gharajedaghi's (Chapter 1) view that change can provoke fear.

Nevertheless, Gharajedaghi argues that it is considerably easier for an individual within a sociocultural system to change than it is for the system as a whole to change (Chapter 1). This is because it is easier for one person to change his or her mind than it is to get a complex system to change. After all, there are so many competing interests in a system, and stability is usually provided by the shared image. If the shared image changes, a people's identity and way of interacting change, too, and that can feel threatening to subsets of the population. Gharajedaghi suggests that group social learning is possible – a new idea can take hold, reach a critical mass, and effect change. "Although culture pre-exists for individuals, it can be transformed and reproduced by their purposeful actions. It is here that the key obstacles to and opportunities for development are found, including the collective ability and desire of a people to create the future they want. Human culture... stands at the center of the process of change. This is so true that the success of individual actions invariably depends on the degree to which they penetrate and modify the 'shared image'" (Chapter 1, p. 8). Clearly, change is a challenging process, but individuals who are dissatisfied with the status quo can work toward what they believe is a more just society.

For military leaders, it is helpful to analyze the nature and causes of conflict. Arenas fraught with potential for conflict – such as resource allocation, political power, and competing cultural discourses – offer helpful insight into strategies for resolving problems. As Wolf points out, "Water management is, by definition, conflict management" (Chapter 12, p. 152). As with many other issues, water management is based on competing interests with multiple objectives. Wolf uses the concepts of *resilience* and *vulnerability* to talk about water issues, but these concepts can just as effectively be applied to other sociocultural systems issues. As Wolf defines it, resilience is the human-environmental system's ability to adapt to changes within a given system. Vulnerability is the risk of dispute over a shared resource. A key equation accompanies these concepts: "The likelihood of conflict rises as the rate of change within the [water] basin exceeds the institutional capacity to absorb that change" (Wolf, Yoffe, & Giordano, 2003, p. 43).

Take the word water out of that equation and consider it as a truth of sociocultural systems in general. The equation then becomes one of system capacities, system stressors, the nature and degree of change, and the outcomes. Rapid change is a stressor; institutional capacity is a stress-absorber.

The Need for Multiple Perspectives in Creating Change

Batson warns that local governance structures need to be carefully studied in such contexts, as "[e]xternal actors' actions can unwillingly duplicate, circumvent, or thwart the efforts of popularly supported sub-state entities" (Chapter 11, p. 144). To this end, he is pleased with the recent creation of the Department of State-based Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), which seeks "sustainable solutions guided by local dynamics and actors, and promotes unity of effort, the strategic use of scarce resources, and burden-sharing with international partners" (as cited in Batson, Chapter 11, p. 142). Note the emphasis on *finding solutions guided by local dynamics and actors*. Too often, solutions are untenable because local people are not included in the planning and execution of problem-solving strategies (O'Conor, Roan, Cushner, & Metcalf, 2009; Ramsden Zbylut, Metcalf, & Brunner, 2011). For instance, if a hospital needs ventilators but lacks the parts and skilled labor necessary to maintain the ones provided by foreign donors, that is a short-lived solution to a long-term problem. The result is that the remedies are unsustainable for local people, who may lack will (it is not their issue), training (it is not part of their skill set), or necessary materials (why did a foreign vendor bring in machinery for which local people have no spare parts?). The change process is ongoing in many places. As Van Arsdale states, in the new Republic of South Sudan community outreach teams will be developing, and they will involve "both surface and sub-surface communications, as well as both formal and informal leaders" (Van Arsdale, Chapter 14, p. 198). These teams will work on important issues such as land ownership and use, land fraud, and disputes over cattle, and it is important that they be allowed to do their work. Enfranchising local opinion along the way will improve the odds of the work's success.

Significant errors have been committed when expatriates of a sociocultural system are consulted, but not the people who actually still live there. Consider, for example, how John F. Kennedy relied very early in his presidency on the perspective of Cuban exiles as he planned foreign policy (Schlesinger, 1965). Also, in preparing for the most recent Iraq war, the U.S. government relied heavily on Iraqi-American expatriates for perspectives on the thoughts and feelings of Iraqis in general. This proved to be a problematic approach to understanding Iraqis (Smith, Chapter 2). Collaboration is likely to be the most beneficial possible strategy, as it allows different perspectives to be brought to the decision-making process and allows all participants to "engage in their role as solvers" (Lorentz, 2011, p. 11). It is important to note that our intuitive reactions about what is likely to happen in a given situation may be wrong.

The benefit of encouraging diverse perspectives in the change process is highlighted by Moaddel in his chapter on predicting change in the Middle East. He looks at cultures as "repertoires of conflicting elements" (Chapter 7, p. 87). When a dominant set of narratives, cultural schemas, and ideologies is sanctioned by the state, political and social stability are more likely. Change often begins with emerging issues, whether positive (e.g., a technological innovation) or negative (e.g., an economic or political crisis), to which the majority of the

population reacts. In many cases, the popular will, when fully exercised, is sufficient to overthrow a government. A plurality of discourses in a society is usually a good thing, Moaddel emphasizes, since it allows people to choose among a range of ideas and options, to engage in debate, and to achieve consensus. Where there is little intellectual pluralism, in contrast, fundamentalism is more likely to dominate (Chapter 7).

Additional Considerations in Creating Conditions for Sustainable Change

A moral responsibility accompanies any effort to intervene in a foreign sociocultural system. As M. J. Smith argues, "[W]hen we encounter another culture, we must consider rigorously what impact our action will have on the human rights of people immediately affected *and* on whether the proposed action strengthens or weakens the international human rights regime" (Chapter 2, p. 23). Because interventions are likely to alter irrevocably the sense of identity of a nation or culture, interventions should be perceived as having permanent effects. The authors of this anthology encourage all intervening groups to hold the big picture in mind and to know that second and third-order effects (at a minimum) are inherent in many impacts to systems. Army Leadership Doctrine echoes this concern: "Like a chess player trying to anticipate an opponent's moves three or four turns in advance (action-reaction-counteraction), leaders must think through what they expect to occur because of a decision. Some decisions may set off a chain of events" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006b, p. 6-1).

Respecting, understanding, and working within the dimensions that create a unique social identity are important. For example, when dealing with disputes, it is best to choose approaches that support both fairness and flexibility. This means taking into account formal and informal networks, clan and lineage issues, communication preferences, cultural narratives (including narratives of success and failure), and culturally-sanctioned decision-making processes. In Chapter 14, Van Arsdale encourages change agents to engage all local stakeholders in change-related processes, as this will increase the likelihood of success and minimize the likelihood of harming functional aspects of the sociocultural system. By including both dominant and subordinate groups in planning, decision-making, and implementation of projects, leaders will likely prevent mistakes and avoid creating problems that must be corrected after the fact.

In Glenzer's chapter on Sub-Saharan Africa (Chapter 17), he urges individuals to investigate how nations achieve stability, how and why they experience rapid changes of fortune (such as the startling and often sudden changes of fortune he describes as common in Sub-Saharan Africa), what causes them to fall apart, and how they are affected by outsiders. Outsiders can help stabilize a shaky nation, but they cannot by themselves build legitimate political or other kinds of authority. The people of the nation in question must ultimately be the people who achieve that goal. Planning interventions for sociocultural systems – by governments, NGOs, or other actors – needs to emphasize local, sustainable solutions based on the nature and capabilities of the sociocultural system in question.

Glenzer's theoretical lens about sociocultural systems encourages us to learn about specific structures that are key to these systems – rights, responsibilities, and power. He asks what legitimizes the social order, what accepted forms of domination and hierarchy are present, and what the accepted meanings of things and circulating cultural narratives are. There are

relatively few formal rules of a society's institutions compared to many informal, unwritten rules that govern things. Understanding the latter is as important as understanding the former. It is not uncommon for an outsider looking at a sociocultural system to believe that one group is oppressing another. Glenzer indicates that sociocultural systems include a great deal of consensus whereby all parties tacitly agree to the status quo power structure (unfair as it may seem to outside eyes). He paraphrases cultural materialist Raymond Williams – hegemony is "not something that the powerful do to others; hegemony is a shared social achievement, participatory rather than exclusionary in nature" (Chapter 17, p. 239). Water (Wolf, Chapter 12), property (Demarest, Chapter 10), and gender roles (Brooks, Chapter 15) are areas where there is often a good deal of tacit agreement within a sociocultural system.

If enough actors in a society do not agree to the hegemonic system, however, it breaks down. The system is always under pressure, and even people living in fear (of government, military, or insurgency) exert pressure on the system. Disturbances within a system can also affect change, sometimes by creating a surprising feedback loop wherein a seemingly small disruption has a large impact. The less entrenched core values, perspectives, and shared images are, the easier it is to create change. As mentioned earlier, positive change can be influenced by having a "shared image of a desired future" (Gharajedaghi, Chapter 1). However, if a system is seriously damaged or destroyed with no shared goal or image of the future, then change may create chaos.

Some of the power dynamics of a sociocultural system are conscious and known to participants, but many are unconscious and internalized. It is this more subtle level that many of the authors in this anthology urge us to study. For instance, Glenzer cites French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu's view that there are many obvious forms of capital – money, goods and services – that can be exchanged. Symbolic, cultural, and social capital, that is to say, forms of *invisible capital,* can also be exchanged for more visible forms of capital (Chapter 17). Elders who make decisions about community justice, for instance, may not be materially wealthy. Instead, they wield the symbolic capital of having a respected role.

Execution of Change Efforts

How should change efforts be executed? Several of this anthology's authors believe negotiation is often a productive tool. For Wolf, negotiation is about people, relationships, and world-views. Some people do not believe, for example, that water can be owned or sold. The analytic and rational traditions of the global North and West have been shown to be at odds at times with the global South and East, with its more "holistic, integrated balance" (Wolf, Chapter 12). The difference is profound, as it means that every process may also be different. "When analytic and holistic thinkers define problems differently, they generate different types of plans," argue Klein and Kuperman (2008, p. 105). When the West treats water as an economic zero-sum rights-based commodity, it can offend those who see it as a needs-based, mutually beneficial, and spiritually sacred entity. Water negotiations reveal that needs-based approaches create more compassion and understanding among entities than do rights-based approaches. Rights-based traditions thrive in North America and Europe; needs-based traditions are more commonly found everywhere else.

Collectivist cultures tend to be oriented toward the good of the group, and are often more overtly spiritually-oriented than individualist cultures. Members of collectivist cultures often "believe that many factors may influence the outcome of events and thus have a tendency to consider the entire context as relevant when finding meaning and making judgments," in contrast to individualists (Cushner, Chapter 3, p. 38). This division is important, and if a selected negotiation approach is a cultural mismatch, it is likely to fail. What we learn from the authors of this anthology about international outreach includes practicing humility (Tinsley & Mayo, Chapter 4), attending to ethical standards (Smith, Chapter 2), not damaging beneficial existing systems (Batson, Chapter 11; Demarest, Chapter 10; Glenzer, Chapter 17; Iqbal, Chapter 16), being reflective and self-reflective (Cushner, Chapter 3; Van Arsdale, Chapter 14), being attentive to nuances of communication (Greene-Sands, Chapter 5), inviting local people (including women and ethnic groups) to participate in change efforts (Brooks, Chapter 15; Van Arsdale, Chapter 14), and proceeding with patience and caution (Cushner, Chapter 3).

The Ethics of Intervention in a Sociocultural System

This anthology reveals a consensus by scholars of many backgrounds – military, government, and academic – that when the United States or another power intervenes in a sociocultural system, its influence or impact becomes part of that system. It will leave its mark on the history and experience of the affected people, as can be seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. The anthology's authors agree that ethical considerations are paramount in considerations of interventions of all kinds, but whether ethical precepts should be universal or allow for some degree of cultural difference is a subject under discussion and a worthy topic for future study. All of the authors encourage respect for the cultures of others. They recommend caution and careful ethical consideration before and during any intervention in a sociocultural system. In Chapter 2, M. J. Smith argues that evaluation of whether an intervention can succeed is part of the ethical inquiry; militaries should not be ordered by civilian governments to undertake impossible missions. Similarly, military leaders should beware of stretching the can-do ethos far beyond reasonable limits. "Leaders must also be careful not to set 'ethical traps' for subordinates by asking them to do too much with too little—a caveat we haven't always heeded in our recent operations," argue Chiarelli and S. Smith (2007, p. 14).

It has been reasonably argued that ethics is not innate, but rather "must be inculcated" (Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires, 2007, p. 112). Many authors in this anthology urge any group whose actions disrupt another group's sociocultural system to consider on a recurrent basis their ethical responsibilities, no matter how "good" the intervening group's intentions. Several chapters in this anthology offer a lesson in humility, as the authors have come to understand how difficult it is to influence a sociocultural system in beneficial ways, and how easy it is to inadvertently create unwanted effects. As retired General Petraeus asserts, outsiders can never understand the "situation and the people" as well as insiders (2006, p. 3). Costs and benefits need to be analyzed before every operation and "cultural awareness is a 'force multiplier'" (p. 3). He warns, "Do not try to do too much with your own hands," while pointing out that "increasing the number of stakeholders is critical to success" (p. 3). In regard to issues of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, dispute resolution, and property, sociocultural systems around the world differ, and so it is critical to understand the various kinds of terrain where operations may take place. Errors are inevitable. As Chiarelli and S. Smith write, "When we do fall short of our

ethical and moral standards, we must candidly admit our wrongdoing, hold individuals up and down the chain of command accountable, and move forward. Too often, we are reluctant to admit mistakes, which only serves to further antagonize those whose support we rely on so much" (2007, p. 14). Soldiers must "do what's right, legally and morally" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006b, p. 2-7).

"The task then," writes M. J. Smith, "is how to encourage respect for difference in ways that still value our common humanity" (Chapter 2, p. 20). He warns that a contemporary strand of argument advocating cultural and moral relativism – perhaps out of respect for cultural differences – is highly problematic when aligned with human rights issues. Moral relativism can suggest that there is no one common good, and that moral capability and moral worth may differ among peoples. Taken far enough, this logic symbolically dismantles long-standing global consensus about human rights and historical agreements among nation-states. Moral relativism risks taking pressure off corrupt leaders to do what is ethically right for their people, and can enable some people to conflate tolerance and ethics. This kind of thinking has at times been called the "anthropologist's heresy" (Smith, Chapter 2).

Human rights need to be about "[e]veryone's reasonable claims upon the rest of humanity" (Shue, 1980, p. 19). The Centre des Hautes Etudes Militaires identifies the "ultimate value" that governs ethics as "respect for man's integrity and freedom. Human dignity is the rock to which we must cling in all circumstances" (2007, p. 110). Army Leadership Doctrine refers to the core Army value of respect: "Treat people as they should be treated" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006b, p. 2-7). Basic daily interactions between military leaders and individuals overseas should be imbued with respect for those individuals' rights and cultural norms, including justice, health, individual liberties, and education. In the larger context, such as the decision to invade another country, M. J. Smith argues that civilian and military leaders considering armed or other forms of intervention must undertake "a serious strategic and ethical inquiry" (p. 16) before making decisions, and that this inquiry must be revisited throughout any mission undertaken. The mission, he believes, should be stopped if it becomes ethically untenable.

Knowing Ourselves in Order to Know Others

In addition to looking at sociocultural systems using specific optics and tools – such as looking at governance, property, heritage, or clan-related issues – a number of the authors encourage awareness of cognitive and cultural biases. Inherent in how people perceive others are the cultural and perceptual biases that govern their habits of thinking and perceiving. In order to understand others even to a modest degree, military leaders must understand themselves. They cannot understand or work effectively within a sociocultural system if they do not see it (insofar as possible) as it is from different perspectives. This is an extremely difficult task, and several authors in this anthology encourage humility about the limits of what can be learned and understood in sociocultural systems very different from our own. M. J. Smith cites literary and cultural theorist Tzvetan Todorov's thinking about stages of cultural assimilation and warns that it is difficult to get into the cultural mindset of people different from us, especially with limited training and exposure (Chapter 2).

As Cushner points out in his chapter on cross-cultural thinking differences (Chapter 3), even how we *see* differs across cultural boundaries. Americans and Europeans, for example, are more likely to notice the individual figure, rather than the ground or context on which that figure exists. Americans tend to make causal attributions – about good and evil and blame – with a bias toward individual actors or ideas rather than with emphasis on the broader context. In this, among many other ways, we differ from collectivist cultures. These sorts of perceptual differences have been documented by numerous research investigations – Americans and East Asians, for example, will not even describe the contents of a fish tank in the same way (Cushner, Chapter 3). Nor will they assign responsibility or relate to legal contracts in the same way. Asians look at the surrounding context and find multiple possible causes or explanations, often choosing not to fault the individual. Americans, as analytic thinkers, tend to do the opposite, focusing on one dimension and looking for causality there (Cushner, Chapter 3). Because Western perspectives tend to group things into categories – a normal cognitive process that can lead to stereotyping – we may fail to investigate the context and instead make attributions based on our assumptions about the category.

Self-reflection is an essential part of becoming good cultural thinkers. The authors in this anthology recommend that we continuously work to understand ourselves – whether in the realm of cognitive biases (Cushner, Chapter 3; Tinsley & Mayo, Chapter 4), nonverbal communication (Greene-Sands, Chapter 5), or differences between collectivist and individualist cultural orientations (Cushner, Chapter 3; Van Arsdale, Chapter 14). In addition to understanding ourselves, steps can be taken to understand those with whom we work. Social perspective-taking is extremely important, because successful communication depends on understanding the thoughts and feelings of other people (Roan, Strong, Foss, Yager, Gehlbach, & Metcalf, 2009). However, while we can move toward greater understanding of self and other, we are highly likely to remain mainly products of our home culture, with a hard-won but modest understanding of the deep underpinnings of someone else's culture. To use a popular metaphor, if a culture is an iceberg, the part that is obvious to all is the small part that rises above the surface of the water. The vast expanse of the iceberg lies hidden (e.g., Cushner, Chapter 3).

There are significant differences in thinking, biases, and values when the Western tradition is compared with that of the East. The Western tradition is descended from the Greek emphasis on analysis and rationality, and on the primacy of the individual, while the Eastern tradition, descended from the Confucian emphasis on collectivism, tends to be more holistic, with an emphasis on larger networks of interrelated people (Cushner, Chapter 3). If we hold such things in mind, we can understand why decision-making in collectivist cultures involves more extended processes and timeframes than decision-making in Western cultures. At the same time, as M. J. Smith warns, we need to avoid falling into the dualistic trap of thinking of the world in terms of analytic vs. holistic world views (Chapter 2). Sen (2002) points out there is no such thing as Western culture that is not permeated with influence from the East. Cognitive simplifications exist for a reason – our brains cannot work on complex problems without these heuristics – but awareness of how biases affect our thinking is very important, as is cultivating modesty about what we can and do not know. Given these constraints, military leaders should be realistic about their forces' ability to impact sociocultural systems. They need to confront their assumptions, recognize that a great deal of not very useful ideology is based on dividing the world along religious lines, and discern what is ethical, complex, and true.

Tinsley and Mayo explain a number of thinking and perceptual biases that can distort our understanding of ourselves and others (Chapter 4; see also Roan et al., 2009). Language systems have profound differences. For example, Western systems are generally more denotative and Eastern systems are generally more contextual. It is easy to make judgments – often negative ones – about the communication styles of others simply because they are difficult to decode (see also O'Conor, Roan, Cushner, & Metcalf, 2009). Tinsley and Mayo encourage us to see "behavior as a manifestation of a sociocultural system" (Chapter 4, p. 48), and they offer helpful advice to mitigate the problematic effects of many cognitive biases. They encourage individuals and institutions to strive for more complete information when investigating people, places, or issues. To that end, they recommend having multiple and diverse sources of information, to include a strategic selection of key informants; creating and vetting multiple hypotheses; managing carefully all efforts at change; and taking enough time, because change is hard-won and slow.

Greene-Sands explores nonverbal communication as a set of often culture-specific dynamics that reveal important information about cultural norms and values (Chapter 5). For instance, intimacy is expressed by frequent touch in some cultures, by standing close together in others, and by eye gaze in yet others. While the study of sociocultural systems is more oriented toward the "macro" level of understanding and nonverbal communication tends to be most important at the "micro" interpersonal level, understanding the meaning of specific aspects of nonverbal communication is very important to cross-cultural understanding. Facial expression of emotion is universal (Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth, 1972), but the display rules that govern its expression in certain social contexts are often culture-specific. Hand and body gestures, haptics (interpersonal touch), proxemics (distances between people, etc.), vocalics (how people use their voices to express themselves), and oculesics (eye gaze and eye contact issues) reveal a great deal about power and hierarchy, decision-making, and displays of respect and social protocol. Culturally inappropriate nonverbal communication can have significant consequences, so this is a valuable skill set to cultivate (Yager, Strong, Roan, Matsumoto, & Metcalf, 2009).

Directions for Future Research

A significant amount of research predating this anthology has addressed improving individual knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes (KSAAs) related to cross-cultural communication, understanding, and cooperation. New research is needed which focuses on communication, decision-making, and implementing courses of action at the sociocultural systems level. A myriad of questions related to influence efforts, and effective means of integrating citizens of host nations in all change efforts, are worthy topics for future research. Additionally, if sociocultural systems thinking is an important orientation for current and future military leaders, there is a great deal to learn about what constitutes both conceptual and applied sociocultural systems thinking, whether some military leaders have more aptitude for it than others (and why), and what sorts of KSAAs can be acquired to enhance this ability. In addition to the theoretical construct, the actionable aspects are critical for military leaders whose strategic decisions will impact large geographic areas or human terrain. For those who work regionally or locally, understanding how those systems work and being better able to evaluate the potential

higher-order has considerable value. Understanding sociocultural systems can help Soldiers see beyond their immediate goals to the broader contexts their work is affecting.

The authors of this anthology have a number of suggestions for future research. Wolf recommends exploring what makes a system resilient, environmentally or otherwise. Trofino asks, what makes a system (or an element within it, including an insurgent element) vulnerable? These questions can lead to a number of focused research efforts that can in turn lead to applications, such as strengthening civic education because it will create greater resistance to insurgencies. Van Arsdale asks how we can engage insurgents in dialogue so that we have direct understanding of their perspectives. More broadly, are we skilled at perspective-taking cross-culturally and across the "boundaries" of sociocultural systems?

Assessment is another area for future research, particularly effective means of assessing change efforts in sociocultural systems. A number of authors suggest that subsets of sociocultural systems can be defined according to the problem that is being addressed. M. J. Smith suggests that metrics can be misleading, especially if we attempt to impose our ideas of what is "measurable" on someone else's sociocultural system. He encourages modest expectations about what is measurable, and other authors urge caution in the use of quantitative analysis. However, if efforts to address a delineated problem result in metrics or other quantitative data, that can be helpful.

A number of anthology authors believe that partially or wholly qualitative assessments are likely to be more successful when studying sociocultural systems, but need to be grounded in material realities such as property, political and economic structures, and the behavior of groups. Qualitative assessment has been defined in a number of ways, but a helpful definition is that it is less numerically-oriented and more oriented to the *how* and the *why* of the issue being studied. Qualitative assessment is highly appropriate for the study of human behavior and why people do what they do, and often result in interpretive narrative descriptions. Glenzer recommends triangulated methods, which means that several different strands of information or data are compared in an attempt to increase validity of the results. Tinsley and Mayo encourage treating inquiries as continuous hypothesis testing where analysts are on the lookout for data that refute their ideas. Brooks, Van Arsdale, and Glenzer encourage seeking out the voices of those groups within sociocultural systems that are frequently not heard – women, displaced persons, and the politically disempowered. Brooks encourages data-gathering at the local level, not just at the macro level. This is especially important in the arena of interventions, as it makes the choice of strategies more likely to promote social fairness.

Glenzer encourages comparative study of how sociocultural systems have changed over time. Demarest urges investigation of how property works in sociocultural systems because that understanding can be applied as an excellent conflict-resolution tool. All agree that we need to explore culturally acceptable mechanisms for working within sociocultural systems. Tinsley and Mayo, as well as Glenzer, recommend studying how rights and responsibilities (and thus power) are allocated in sociocultural systems, and what they reveal about the systems in question. Ideally, military leaders will be able to cultivate sociocultural systems thinking along with the awareness that some things are unknown and perhaps unknowable.

Conclusion

This anthology is a contribution to what we hope becomes an extended discussion about sociocultural systems and related thinking. It is fueled by the hope of better understanding sociocultural systems and having more mutually respectful and successful interactions between our sociocultural system and those of peoples in other parts of the world. There is a great deal yet to learn about the interrelationships and internal dynamics of sociocultural systems, but broadening the focus from the micro to the macro – from individuals and communities to complex systems – is an important endeavor. New forms of awareness, combined with a toolkit of ways for looking at sociocultural systems and their internal dynamics, can help expand the ability to ask good questions, involve local people from diverse backgrounds, create multiple informed hypotheses, seek disconfirming and confirming evidence, and draw conclusions with care. There is no right or final word on the inner workings of a sociocultural system or how best to interact with one. The best we can do is to keep asking questions, reflecting, and trying to understand – always with humility and awareness that our beliefs may be more a reflection of who we are than of the sociocultural system we are trying to understand. The hope is that we will be able to see the world through new lenses, and understand it and ourselves in new ways.

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