Varying Cultures in Modern Crisis Management

Finnish Defence Forces International Centre

Edited by Susanne Ådahl

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PREFACE

It has been 53 years since Finland sent soldiers out on a peacekeeping mission for the first time. The slogan of those first Finnish Peacekeepers: "Maassa maan tavalla tai kotiin" ("In a country according to the country's habits or home") stands as true today as it stood then.

Peacekeeping has evolved into today's complex and integrated crisis management. From the deployed force being an interposition force between parties who had a ceasefire or peace agreement sponsored by the two military powers of the cold war, the role of the deployed force has become an establisher of a safe and secure environment for other stakeholders to fulfill their tasks in nation building. This may involve military activities from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. Thereby, the interaction between the force and the indigenous population of the area of operations has increased, as has the interaction with other non-military stakeholders. The need for understanding the cultures of both the local population and the other stakeholders has increased to the point where it may be vital to a mission's success.

Need to Understand Culture in Crisis Management

In this new environment it has become necessary to understand what cultural variation entails. Controversies within crisis management testify to the urgent need to deal sensibly with cultural differences. To respond to this need the centrality of a people-centred approach within crisis management has gained ground, and with it the idea that since people, their interests and agendas are at the core of each conflict, it is of vital importance to become familiar with the values and norms that motivate human behaviour. This is knowledge that will help personnel within various agencies and organisations implement more efficient crisis management and to better respond to the needs of local populations.

After the cold war the initiation of 'multifunctional' crisis management operations brought with it a larger degree of interactions between the military and the various civilian organisations and agencies. Today crisis management operations truly bring together an array of diverse actors, which can and does create challenges for cultural interaction. In spite of a multitude of experiences on the ground, indicating the importance of culture on the operability of crisis management operations, 'cultural awareness' and 'cultural sensitivity' has been surprisingly little used as a focal point in understanding the shortcomings of operations. Only in recent years has culture been seen as an important ingredient enabling the successful implementation of these interventions.

Having realised this, various stakeholders, with the military in the lead, have initiated a number of efforts to bring cultural awareness into the focus of crisis management. An overall agreement that a desired end-state for any crisis management effort has to take culture into consideration has been recognized. T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) stated in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* that it is "better to have them coming up with a workable solution than us implementing a perfect solution". The interpreted meaning being that the local population has to come up with a solution that works for their culture instead of the foreign presence setting up a solution based on its virtues and values, its culture.

Culture and Cultural Awareness

With this in mind, it is important to realise that culture is all around us as an integral part of human life, something that informs all human behaviour. Briefly put, it is systems of meaning and a set of practices learned through a process of socialisation. Thus, it is something that is socially shared between members of a social group, through a web of non-verbalized understandings, common language, habits, behaviours, symbols, traditions, ideas, values, beliefs, ideals, norms and expectations. It thus includes both observable phenomena and ideas. Culture is both something universal that we all share, and at the same time it is something specific to a particular group of people. In this sense it is both something that unites all people and differentiates them from each other. Above all, culture is dynamic and transformative. People understand and enact culture in a wide variety of ways within a society or group.

Being culturally aware means recognising that we are all shaped by our cultural background, which influences how we interpret the world around us, perceive ourselves and relate to other people. You don't need to be an expert in every culture or have all the answers to be culturally aware; rather, cultural awareness helps you to explore cultural issues with your cooperation partners and various stakeholders more sensitively.

Social and cultural dynamics shape the manner in which individuals involved in crisis management understand the meanings of central terms like 'intervention', 'security' and 'management'. There may often be different, and sometimes conflicting, understandings of these terms, leading to gaps in communication and misunderstandings of the motives behind activities. To bring about real change in practices it is important to go beneath the surface of cultural elements, those that are often listed in prescriptive guidelines on the do's and don'ts of acceptable cultural behavior. A first step is to recognize that the manner in which individuals act, speak about and represent an intervention and its target makes a difference. Also of importance is the issue of legitimacy and authority. Views on who has the right to carry out interventions and how these interventions are carried out are culturally constituted.

Cultural elements need to be contextualised and embedded in an understanding of the symbolism used by all parties involved in crisis management interventions, including the local community. This kind of 'deep' cultural approach recognises the importance of a historical awareness of both the local context and the organisational culture of the various organisations and agencies involved. Constant revision of shared understandings and meanings need to be undertaken to avoid oversimplification and stereotyping within the planning and implementation of crisis management activities.

Crisis management should be seen as a form of cultural practice in itself, as a set of meaningful, patterned, activities that carry symbolic importance. Only in this way will it be possible to create shared understandings of the meanings and rationales behind crisis management initiatives. This is a process in motion where the cultural context and understanding of these interventions change over time and will differ from location to location.

Integrating Cultural Awareness

An additional challenge is what should be done to integrate cultural awareness, in a comprehensive manner, into crisis management? On the most elementary level it is an issue of mindset, of self-reflection as a starting point to being open to cultural difference. Culture is often seen as an obstacle to operability when one lacks knowledge, instead of as a richness and opportunity. Knowing is understanding, and through understanding one can devise responses that respect the multiplicity of human behaviour. Through appropriately designed training, personnel deployed in crisis management operations can better meet the challenges posed by culture and use them as opportunities to implement improved interventions that impact positively on the lives of local populations, learning from, and working with, the people.

It is important to realise that the need for integrating cultural awareness is not unique to any one level of crisis management, but has to be implemented and understood at all levels, starting from the strategic level, where resolutions and mandates have to be culturally correct for the intended mission. This way the guidance given to different stakeholders has to be tolerant of cultural variation. The end state has to be acceptable for the target population and communicated to them in such a manner that they will be supportive of it. At the operational level, where interaction with the local population's leadership is important, operational planning and communication has to be adapted to suit the culture of the area and be understood by the population. At the tactical level, where implementation of these plans is performed, care has to be taken to implement it in a way that shows respect towards local culture and, if possible, integrates the population.

To achieve this, cultural awareness has to be integrated into training for personnel at all levels and from all stakeholder groups. The desired end state should be a functioning society that contributes to the world society overall. This proves the wisdom of the original slogan of Finnish peacekeepers from more than fifty years ago: "Maassa maan tavalla tai kotiin".

FINCENT, in cooperation with many of its partners, tries to fulfill its part in including cultural awareness in crisis management, cooperating at the national level with its civilian counterpart CMC Finland to prepare Finnish personnel, involved with crisis management, through courses and seminars. At the international level FINCENT represents the Finnish view on cultural awareness, through different venues and in different frameworks such as Nordic Cooperation. This is done by participating in different working groups and seminars, through the production of publications such as the NORDCAPS PSO TACTICAL MANUAL and by holding its own courses and supporting the courses of other institutions by providing them with expert lecturers and instructors.

Through this publication, with its collection of articles, FINCENT wishes to stimulate discussion and awareness on the need to include a cultural dimension within crisis management operations. Another aim of the publication is to bring forward Finnish lessons learnt and views on the integration of culture at all stages of crisis management.

Esa Vanonen
Lieutenant Colonel
Commandant FINCENT

Introduction

The environments in which integrated crisis management operations function today are complex and ever changing. The nature of conflicts has changed to become more multi-facetted and unclear, engaging a multitude of actors. At the centre of these conflicts are people, their agendas, concerns and aspirations. In order to more efficiently reach these stakeholders and better serve their needs it has become increasingly important to understand how cultural factors impact on values and practices. And indeed, in contemporary comprehensive crisis management the necessity to possess cultural awareness has become a catch phrase of the day.

Without a doubt, it is vitally important that we turn our gaze on culture and truly scrutinize what it means to implement a cultural analysis of crisis management[1]. Putting culture on the agenda is a little bit like opening Pandora's Box – everything and anything can emerge. We may easily run the risk of blaming everything on culture, if we fail to clearly investigate and specify what we mean by it. What we essentially need to do is concretely identify cultural factors in crisis management initiatives and operationalise culture – a huge challenge in itself, but an engaging one. No matter how much one would like to get on with business the simple fact remains that more culturally aware crisis management professionals will produce better crisis management. To achieve this, actors will need to understand each other better, communicate more clearly, and respect and work with the cultural differences and similarities they meet with in the course of their work.

The purpose of this publication is to open up the dialogue on this important issue among the multitude of actors in this field. There is a lot of experience out there, many stories, and instructive memories that need to be put to use. The contributors to this volume are Finnish professionals with various backgrounds in terms of professional orientation, international work experience and the type of activities they have engaged in within the sector of integrated crisis management. They represent both the military and civil sides of the field, as well as academia. The articles are based on their experiences of meeting with various cultures in the context of their professional life and the types of challenges and opportunities this has given rise to.

In the first part of the publication the authors look at how crisis situations and conflicts are based on cultural factors and how they impact on the different parties involved and on the efficacy of present day crisis management responses. Tuomo Melasuo sets the scene by providing an overview of the concept of culture and the role of cultural relativism and universality. He stresses that definition is important, but also recognises that the cultural dimension is primarily a practical question. He provides four central approaches as to how to include cultural dimensions into crisis management. What Kalle Liesinen proposes is that awareness of one's own cultural position provides the basis for a deep cultural awareness, taking one beyond artificially learned decorum. Helena Partanen finds that on the operational level, where many cultures are intertwined, it is crucial to have a shared conception of what culture is and to make use of lessons learned also in a historical sense. Learning from the past can provide us with vital resources for the future understanding of conflicts and reveal paths

[1] For an overview of how crisis management can be studied as a cultural question please refer to Robert Rubinstein (2008), Peacekeeping Under Fire. Culture and Intervention, Boulder & London: Paradigm Books.

towards resolving crisis situations. A historical awareness of national and regional history shows us that conflict is characterised by enduring structures that are closely intertwined on a regional level. This is definitely the case with the long lasting crisis in the Horn of Africa that Simo-Pekka Parviainen describes. Long-term crisis requires even longer-term reconciliation and reconstruction processes – there are no short cuts to lasting peace, he contends.

The second part of the publication deals with how culture is visible on organisational and operational levels, as part of the organisational culture of the military and civilian actors in both national and international contexts. For recovery to commence in crisis areas it is vital to stabilise the situation. Olli Ruohomäki underscores that it is important that international actors ensure that they have shared objectives and a clear division of labour and responsibilities on the mission level as one means of improving the security situation. Acknowledging and recognising organisational cultural differences, including constraints of capacity is a vital step in this process. What, in addition, complicates this already multifaceted equation is the collision and cooperation of various professional cultures on the field level, as exemplified by the experience of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that Oskari Eronen so insightfully describes. He stresses that we ought to heed the lessons learned from the PRTs so as to pave a more even path for the establishment of a Nordic Stabilisation Task Force, as proposed by Thorvald Stoltenberg. The role of local cultures in reconstruction work is a subject that Rolf Helenius delves into, recounting his experiences in Afghanistan. He outlines some of the key features of the extremely complex cultural context of the country, including historical, socio-political, ethnical, and migration related factors. Using indigenous expertise to increase understanding of the situation is not always straightforward because advisers themselves may experience uncertainty as to which culture they belong.

How can one increase the efficacy of crisis management responses through various capacity building measures like the training of personnel on cultural awareness, and what other measures can be employed to increase intercultural communication? At what stages of service delivery should cultural awareness be implemented? The third part of the publication aims to respond to these questions. Helinä Kokkarinen suggests, that as crisis management professionals, we are the tools of our work and, accordingly we need to act as living examples of the guiding principles and values of Finland's National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management, which helps us gain the trust of the local population. Improving the efficacy and success of missions is also an issue of the capacity building of personnel. Annika Launiala illuminates how organisations need to provide appropriate training on intercultural skills, including not only a knowledge of what these skills are, but also how these skills can be applied in actual work situations. Finland will, presumably, in the future increase its activity in the crisis management sector, which will pose increased demands on the training of military officers. Petri Toivonen discusses how the training of intercultural competence is included in present day cadet education, but that it needs to be expanded considerably to help officers meet the challenges of increasingly complex mission settings, by providing long-term rotational training on both culture-specific and culture-general issues.

The concluding article by Susanne Ådahl attempts to summarise the lessons learned and the recommendations provided in the contributions of the publication. It also offers some basic hints on how to be a more culturally confident crisis management professional, arguing that it all starts with our own attitudes, skills and knowledge.

The arguments presented in the articles are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the institutions they represent.

Culture as Part of Crisis Situations

Cultural Dimensions in Crises in General and in Crisis Management in Particular

Tuomo Melasuo

Introduction

Today, in the era of globalisation, addressing cultures[1] in the context of political, economic and social evolution is generally a very sensitive and complex issue. Doing it in relation to crises and crisis management is far more difficult and risky. For about a quarter of a century there has been an increasing tendency to explain various kinds of social and political development through the means of cultures and cultural differences. The role and meaning of culture and cultural debate have since changed to a large extent and we are today in quite a different situation than even ten years ago. Cultures and cultural differences have replaced other factors in explaining the main features and particular development in a given society. In this situation cultures and cultural explanations have become a political phenomena and a tool for making politics.[2] This culturalist *dérive*[3] might lead us to forget that the evolution of societies is always a combination of various sectors and elements. Concerning crises different competing interests, political agendas and struggles for power are certainly the main factors explaining their emergence.

But when making this remark, this *mis en garde*, against the danger of explaining everything by cultures and cultural differences we should, of course, not evacuate and neglect totally the cultural dimensions in explaining the evolution of human societies as well as crises and crisis management. Cultures are certainly forming a kind of background which gives colour and flavour to more concrete factors explaining the evolution of a particular society. So, cultural dimensions are important elements which can not be ignored and which might help a lot in understanding the environment of a given crisis. But before going further on this path we should try to specify what we understand by cultures and cultural dimensions. When we speak about cultural awareness and sensitivity, as we do concerning, for instance, crisis management, what do we actually mean by culture in this context?

Definitions of Culture

Even if it is an improvement and a very positive phenomenon that culture is taken into consideration, the endeavour also contains many problems. As a matter of fact, the way culture is used in public debate has become controversial. Especially the content of this debate on culture remains problematic – culture is usually not defined

[1] Depending on the context both forms of the concept of "culture" are used. The singular is used as a general and more theoretical, abstract term. By using the plural term "cultures" the intention is to show that in a real concrete world different cultures can exist simultaneously within one society or political entity. Here we want also to put emphasis on cultural diversity.

[2] The actual debate on the membership of Turkey to the European Union is a good example of this.

[3] Henry 2004.

at all, but often remains a very loosely used statement. And when there is an attempt at defining it, culture is often reduced to something very narrow, limited and unscientific. Today it is not uncommon for culture to be seen as another appellation for religion – and, along this line of thinking, when you know the religion of an individual person or of a human society you already know the essential and most important elements of the culture in question.[4] This essentialist understanding of culture as primarily equal to religion, as is today often seen in public debate and in the mass media, is not at all sufficient and satisfactory, often it excludes all dynamics. Apparently we need to analyse the ways in which we define and use the concept of culture and the specific context – crisis management – where this is being done.[5]

Concerning crisis management, it is obvious that we can not limit ourselves to some kind of "High Culture" understanding of culture. That is arts, literature and sciences, but we need in many ways a larger and more sophisticated definition. The "Groupe des Sages", a high-level advisory council, nominated by former President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, to think about cultural cooperation in Euro-Mediterranean relations, came up with recommending an anthropological approach to cultures, but without defining it enough.[6] And still this anthropological approach seems to be the most interesting and useful as also proposed in practice in the preface of this volume.

Concerning the immediate vicinity of Europe, the attempt made by Maxime Rodinson, already thirty years ago, to define culture when studying the Arab world, remains pertinent. According to his definition, to put it shortly, culture includes all socially learnt and transmitted ways of behaving and acting, of both individuals and groups, often transferred from one generation to the next.[7] Besides arts and sciences, this means also popular traditions, economic practices and family relations. Even history is included, especially when it is socially elaborated in order to preserve the cohesion of the human entity in question. This anthropologically based definition of culture certainly respects the diversity and the plurality of different cultures, even their dynamism. In that sense it is the best definition that we have, but it does not lead to a very operational concept. It still remains rather general, almost everything human can be included.

The concept of culture can also be approached from the point of view of the different environments in which it is used. In the domain of public opinion, when politicians or the mass media speak about culture, the concept used remains rather general. In fact, terms such as Western, European or Muslim cultures are used as kinds of meta-concepts. They do

[4] Melasuo 2003.

[5] Xavier Ternisien (2005) presents an interesting overview on the relationship of religion and cultures in his article.

[6] *Dialogue between peoples and cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean area*, a report by the High-Level Advisory Group established at the initiative of the President of the European Commission, European Commission, Luxembourg, 2004. During the past decade an important number of EU and EMP (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) documents have been issued concerning culture and the dialogue between cultures. But in none of these documents is there any kind of definition of the concept of culture, not even in the Valencia Action Programme for the Dialogue, *Action programme for the dialogue between cultures and civilisations* (European Commission 2002).

[7] Culture, that is ... "C'est l'ensemble de tous les comportements socialement acquis et transmis, avec toutes les œuvres qui en sont la manifestation: comportements techniques (dont les techniques du corps), pratiques économiques, cognitives, artistiques (y compris les manifestations les plus humbles et les plus momentanées de la pulsion esthétique), juridiques au sens le plus large (modes de groupements, relations de parenté, etc.), idéologiques (religion pour l'essentiel dans les sociétés prémodernes), etc. L'histoire est aussi un phénomène culturel dans le sens où ce qui importe pour assurer la cohésion d'un peuple comme tout groupement, c'est moins l'ensemble des événements dans sa réalité objective que l'image, socialement élaborée et transmise, qu'en garde le groupe.", (Rodinson 1979)

not indicate something special and easy to express, and still everybody seems to know what they refer to. These general, or meta-concepts, such as Muslim culture or European culture, are too loose and large. They are not operational, and so do not help us to understand, for instance, the cultural dimensions of social, economic or political development in a given society. They do not express precisely enough the particularities within them.

But in an environment, which is composed of different kinds of actors, the concept of culture is already something more specific, more operational, and, of course, more limited, but better defined. These actors, at least, usually even know how to use the general term in a more disciplinary manner. They can be different kinds of organisations specialized in the dialogue between cultures, NGOs or scientific actors, and why not also those who are involved with civilian and military crisis management? This leads us to approach the concept of culture depending on the field or sector of human life where it is applied. We can speak about security culture[8], military culture, literary culture, political culture, etc. Then, of course, the concept used is much more precise and operational. This manner of cutting culture into slices might help us with practical issues in crisis management when the focus can be concentrated on concrete solutions.

Maybe we must admit that culture remains a kind of meta-concept, depending very much on the context in which it is used and by whom. This also implies that it can have very contradictory interpretations. When we praise our achievements we see them as products of our culture. And when we reject the "Other", we reject more his culture than a physical person. The tragedy of European Jews and Roma during the Second World War was initially an issue of rejecting their culture before their physical extermination was initiated. Thus culture remains a meta-concept which can be controversially used either positively or negatively. And when we want to use it in scientific debate we must be extremely careful in order to be explicit regarding what we actually mean by it. When dealing with crises and crisis management an issue that is maybe more important than these meta-concepts is the consideration of the cultural dimensions through the ways by which crisis management is done. This will also allow us to understand the meanings of different interpretations in practice.

There are two other questions in this debate on cultures which are extremely important for the theme of this article. They concern so-called cultural relativism and the universality of certain values. It is obvious that cultural specificities should be taken into consideration when we try to understand the particularities of certain phenomena and of given societies. This is essential in order to approach local sensibilities in a realistic and sustainable way. Cultural relativism claims that many norms and values should be estimated mainly from inside a given society and culture, without imposing foreign interpretations and norms. However, this is only partly valid, even if it can help us a lot in understanding several cultural and social particularities. Applying cultural relativism too strictly indicates a rather essentialist and static understanding of cultures that in reality are dynamically evolving in space and time.

In spite of cultural relativism there are a lot of values which are more or less common to the whole of mankind. Thus, in a certain way, the call for universalism stands, at least in theory,

[8] Attina 2004; Panebianco & Attina 2004.

in opposition to cultural relativism. In this debate on universalism versus cultural relativism the most difficult case concerns human rights. Even if some degree of fine-tuning might be possible in certain strictly defined cases it is clear that the principles on which they are based[9] cannot be subjected to any kind of cultural relativism. The basic principles of human rights, good governance and the state of law can be applied to all societies in spite of their cultural particularities. But at the same time we should, maybe, note that this whole debate on cultural differences is somehow concealing the common cultural approaches and shared values of the whole of mankind and its different cultures. A good example of this are the rather astonishing and positives results of a recent study on human sexual life.[10] To conclude this attempt to define cultures and cultural differences we should, perhaps, simply state that the similarities might be more important than what is usually said to be the case.

Still there is a kind of theoretical contradiction inherent in our epoch. Globalisation reinforces cultural unification, with its negative and positive aspects, and maybe also universalism. At the same time, maintaining cultural diversity becomes more and more important. Today it is understood to be as important to mankind as biodiversity. This complex contradiction itself belongs to our common heritage.

Conflicts and Cultures

Cultures are not actors, so they cannot play a central role in any human development, such as in economic development or in violent conflicts. But they can, of course, be used as an instrument, as a tool for different purposes. Cultures very seldom help us to explain the basic reasons for the emergence and evolution of crises. Still they often are behind the scene as a part of the background that has an impact on the crisis in question and maybe even more in terms of the different possible solutions

Religions are often presented as key actors in certain crises. But already the Thirty Year War showed us that the real reasons were political and economic. The same applies to the extended conflict in Ireland between the Protestants and Catholics, as well as for the continuous conflict between Hindus and Muslims on the Indian subcontinent. More generally Islam is today often presented as a main stakeholder in many different kinds of open crises.

In the same way that religion is seen as a cultural factor in crises situations, so languages and language-politics can be presented as important cultural elements, causing crisis and conflicts. In Norway there was a language battle which led to the development of two forms of written Norwegian, that is to "Norwegian Bokmål" and "Norwegian Nynorsk", a battle which almost divided the kingdom. In Finland we had significant tensions between Swedish, Russian and Finnish from the end of the 19th century and until the Second World War. However, in both these Nordic cases language crisis was an expression of deeper social and political contradictions.

[9] http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/, 12.8.2009.

[10] A study by David Buss at the University of Michigan on human sexuality had interesting results. When he asked the respondents, men and women, of 37 different cultures what they found to be the most appealing element in the opposite sex the most frequent answer was not in the list he proposed in his survey, but it was added by the responders themselves: "Having a sense of humour" (Le Monde 2009).

Conflict and culture in the Balkans 2002. Photo: Rolf Helenius

Even if cultures are seldom active parts of a conflict or a crisis they can perform bases and so contribute to their solutions. Concerning religions we can note in this context the statement by the Middle East & North Africa Council of *Religions for Peace*[11], on the Holy Land situation after the Gaza War in 2009, or those of the Jewish organisations backing President Obama´s policy towards settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem.[12] But of course in both of these cases the question is more about political performance than anything else, even if they both are presented as religious cultural behaviour.

Professor Sari Hanafi[13] presents us with an interesting schema on global cultural hierarchies and power games of today in his article on the Danish cartoon controversy.[14] He does not accept any essentialist or identity based argumentation of cultural differences, but instead forwards a Gramscian[15] approach of cultural hegemony connecting, at the same time, multiculturalism with geopolitics. According to Sari Hanafi, with globalisation, multiculturalism has gone global and conflicts cannot any more be contained locally. Global multiculturalism means an engagement with conflicts worldwide. Thus, disrespectful behaviour in Denmark can provoke violent reactions in Pakistan because of feelings of domination and injustice.[16]

[11] In this statement Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders present a five point "Shared Security"-plan for their own communities. Religions for Peace is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action for peace since 1970. With its headquarters in New York and being accredited to the United Nations, Religions for Peace works through affiliated inter-religious councils in 70 countries on six continents. The Middle East & North Africa Council is a regional affiliate (Religions for Peace Middle East/North Africa Council 2009).

[12] Tzedek v'Salom 2009.

[13] Dr. Sari Hanafi is Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, American University of Beirut.

[14] According to Hanafi (2009) the question was not of Muslim identity or freedom of the press, but about a reaction to cultural domination.

[15] Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) was an Italian philosopher who further developed the concept and theory of cultural hegemony in social and political relations. His thinking is mostly published post-humana in his "Prison Notebooks",(Gramsci 1971).

[16] Hanafi (2009) says that the hegemonic and dominant culture did not respect Muslims in Danish cartoons and that was the reason for the crisis.

Cultures in Crisis Management

Including cultural dimensions in crisis management thinking is a very positive contribution to it. Taking cultures into consideration can be an important way forward by achieving long-term and sustainable social and political evolution of societies in crisis. There are at least four important approaches which can make a difference concerning the cultural dimensions of crisis management.

Firstly, let us note that besides being culturally aware and recognizing local cultural specificities the most important element in this domain certainly is *respecting* local cultures in general. This respect and esteem are essential because they allow for further deepening and cooperation in this field. A lack of respect is a far bigger problem than a lack of knowledge concerning some particular cultural features.

Secondly, it is important to realize that in crisis management one should have a rather deep *general understanding of the society or area in question*. Besides understanding its culture, which is necessary but not enough, an understanding of the history of the crisis itself is extremely important, as is the history of the vicinity as a whole. People in charge of crisis management should have an understanding of what the interpretations of different stakeholders are, regarding the reasons for the crisis, and about the actual situation on the ground.[17] Knowledge of political life in the area and the socio-economic living conditions of the population is equally important. We can conclude this point by emphasising the importance of a good and multiform understanding of the complex reality of where the crisis emerged and where its management takes place.

Thirdly, in order to be successful in taking cultural dimensions into consideration in crisis management one should know one´s own culture well enough. It is difficult to understand and respect the culture of others if you do not know enough about your own culture. *Knowing one´s own culture* gives the means to compare it with that of the others, and this is necessary if you want to be able to respect these other cultures. Knowing your culture also gives you the tools to know its limits and particularities, to avoid the risk of adopting a superiority complex, thus permitting dialogue with others.

In order to improve the performance of crisis management attention should also be paid to the *general culture* of those involved in it. This is a difficult issue, because obviously it is not the technical know-how which decides the success of the mission and makes a difference in crisis management, but this often much more sensible and fine-tuned capacity of the crisis manager to pay attention to the often tacit, even hidden, wishes and desires of the stakeholders. The crisis manager can reach this capacity only by having a sufficient level of general culture.

Fourthly, concerning the cultural dimensions at stake, it would certainly be useful if the crisis manager is sufficiently familiar with her/his *own country´s approaches towards different cultural issues*. In the case of Finland, for instance, what is the official attitude to the freedom of religion and to cultural diversity, and what are the international cultural treaties and

[17] On this point, peace and conflict research has an opportunity to make an important contribution to crisis management.

conventions the country has ratified? This might help to deal with the local cultures in a reasonable and flexible way.

The same goes for *international and universal cultural issues*. Crisis management would in practice only benefit if universal cultural principles – often expressed in UN and UNESCO treaties – are somehow taken into consideration when the mission is planned. Of course, the same is valid concerning the international *debate on these cultural dilemmas* regarding what are its different options, opinions and argumentations.

Conclusions

Besides all the theoretical approaches and international debate on cultural issues, let us remember that cultural dimensions in crisis management are still primarily a practical question. It is something which should be included in the planning of all crisis management missions, and in the training of their personnel, both civilian and military alike. It should perhaps be inbuilt into all tailor-made crisis management. In the people-centred approaches, presented in the preface of this volume, the goal of this might be to help the local communities to reach their own cultural aspirations and wishes.

Regarding this, one could consider benefitting from the contribution of different kinds of professional organisations which are dealing with cultures and dialogue between cultures. In the Euro-Mediterranean environment the Anna Lindh Foundation[18] could help in designing approaches needed, and in the UN context the Alliance of Civilisations[19] has extensive experience in these issues.[20]

Understanding cultural dimensions in crisis management is respecting other people´s cultures. Respecting cultures means respecting people. Misunderstandings on this point often lie behind confrontations in cultural domains. With good reason or not, people might feel that their dignity has not been respected and they respond to this injustice by defending their cultures.[21] In crisis management the proposed solutions should also be felt by local populations to be culturally just. When taking into consideration different values, it is often said of our globalized world that values are, to an increasing degree, based on individual appreciations rather than on collective and cultural norms. This highlights the need to respect other people´s dignity and their feelings of justice.

In fino, we could add to the Finnish proverb and wisdom, presented in the preface of this volume, another one: ”Olkaa sitten ihmisiksi”.[22]

[18] The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures, created by all the 43 Euro-Mediterranean partner countries in 2004, its secretariat is located in Alexandria.
[19] The Alliance of Civilisations was created in 2005 by the initiative of the Spanish and Turkish governments. Today it functions under the auspices of the UN and its secretariat is located in the UN headquarters in New York.
[20] Let us note that there is a moral and ethical debate about the US Army using anthropologists within their forces in the operational fields. Concerning crisis management this would perhaps be less controversial.
[21] Council of Europe 2008.
[22] “Behave like human beings”.

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Cultural competence – smooth behaviour or deep understanding?

Kalle Liesinen

My old sergeant major used to ask conscripts whether they knew what the problem really was. Usually nobody dared to answer and so he got his chance to emit wisdom: "You are the problem". The same truth fits relatively well into cultural awareness because we all are part of culture and our approach is thus limited. In crisis management we are exceptionally exposed to culture-related dilemmas. In violent and otherwise difficult cross-cultural surroundings we have to go through formidable experiences and try to understand seemingly unpredictable situations. Often our own cultural clumsiness as crisis management workers is under deep surveillance and similarly we add to the mental strain by having high expectations of our own personal achievements. When our aim is essentially to save the world, or at least greatly improve the situation, our first challenge is to understand our own culture.

Culture Within Us

Culture is an extremely complicated field of interrelations, postulations and semantics. The variation of different definitions and ways of understanding the word "culture" is as rich as culture itself. We all sit in the same galley chained by our own cultural manifestation which prevents us from adopting the position of an outside observer. We can scrutinize a particular society at a particular time and place. We can define culture as tastes of art and manners that are favoured by a social group or we may step a bit further and consider all the knowledge and values shared by a society as culture. However, we can never escape the fact that the culture is built into our essence and we are marked by the attitudes and behavioural characteristics of our own social group or organization.[1]

The layers of culture affecting us range from the national level to the particular culture of our own organization. We are influenced by ethnic, linguistic, or religious differences even inside our national identity. Gender and generational differences have an impact on us as well as our social class. Our political aspirations may distort our interpretation of cultural factors and our good intentions can blind us when reality does not match up with our expectations.

Observation is a common technique in science as well as in crisis management. In the scientific field little attention was given to the effects of culture on the judgement making process. Recently more attention has been paid to the consideration of cultural differences. Even a laboratory study has verified that observers' cultural positioning is critical when applying observation techniques in cross-cultural research as well as in

[1] About the definition of word culture, see: Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952. About the difficulty to conceptualize cross-cultural variation, see Aho & Takala 2009, table 1, p. 52. About the cultural impact of strategy formulation on organizations, see Schneider 1989, 149–168.

the applied contexts of performance appraisal and international management.[2] This and other studies in various branches of science like anthropology, psychology and sociology point in the same direction as field experiences in multi- and cross-cultural missions. The way we observe society and social situations is coloured by our own cultural background and it dictates what we sense, how we construe our perceptions, how we draw conclusions and how we communicate our judgements.

Finnish people often joke about their willingness to know how they are seen by others. It is interpreted as a sign of being uncertain and shy, which Finns are not, even though the caution we display in terms of our personal behaviour is sometimes misleading. In international comparisons Finland is typically found on the other end of the scale, normally on the positive side.[3] Finns come from a rare niche of the human ecosystem and can easily be bunched together due to tight Finnish national cohesion. Finns are exceptionally prosperous, welfare oriented and painfully gullible when it comes to phenomena such as "constitutional corruption", and the characteristics of societies based on family, band or tribe, rather than on individual and state; We Finns do not even fully understand the culture of our own Roma people. Extreme poverty as well as extreme richness is unknown to us. Particularly in Russia, but also commonly, Finns are considered to be honest, naive and reliable. Finnish motivation is generally seen to be based rather on morals and ethics than any direct interest. Even our close neighbours the Norwegians, who are recognized to be global peacemakers, carry without any particular reason the burden of having an illusive interest in international trade and the oil business[4], not to mention major powers on a global or regional scale that are burdened with layers of different interests.

Thus, by positioning ourselves on the cultural map we can more easily recognize where our personal cultural black spots are and avoid open collision. The first steps taken towards cultural competence call for self assessment, having an open mind and a wide perspective. So, all Finns, feel free to ask how others see you – it is a valuable piece of information.

How to Behave

Too often we try to apprehend a cultural map by using unwarranted stereotypes, unfounded generalization and our own culture as a vantage point. Bookstores all over the world offer books on the do's and don'ts of behaviour in societies around the world and other similar guidebooks.[5] The business world and professional interpreters have produced a huge number of articles covering international behaviour and the listing of practical tips.[6] All this information is useful. It is at least entertaining and to a certain extent it should also be part of general education. Interesting training material is available also on the internet.[7]

[2] Li & Karakowsky 2001.
[3] Test country statistics at http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_step1.php, as an example.
[4] For an example see Bandarage 2008, 201.
[5] Roger E. Axtell is a well known American author in this field and divulges e.g. that Finns – (instead of using the expression "Ins'Allah") – believe it is important to knock on bare wood and therefore knock under the table rather than on top as other westerners like the English and Americans do.
[6] http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles.html
[7] http://www.professionalchaplains.org/uploadedFiles/pdf/learning-cultural-sensitivity.pdf

Human variation within all cultures anyhow helps us to identify familiar souls in other cultures and aids us in overcoming barriers of custom regardless of our trained skills. Tough conditions push us to the edge of Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" and also reveal that common denominators exist among all humans. Putting an assortment of good habits to use will be of help, but a fruitful contact between individuals is in the end based on having a deeper understanding than simply harnessing a bunch of the right tricks.

A stranger can act in an ignorant manner in any country in the world and still be excused for his behaviour. If the stranger shows respect and willingness to learn he is easily accepted. On the other hand, any over-bubbling eagerness to teach, interfere and underline one's own excellence has a negative effect. In this connection it is a blessing to be Finnish. People seldom harbour suspicions of Finns having a second agenda or engaging in damaging endeavours. An additional asset that we have as Finns is our historical legacy – Finland has never been a colonising nation. On the contrary, we have been reigned both by Sweden and Russia. Even our interest in safeguarding human rights is well tolerated particularly when it is linked to the ideal of the rule of law.

Finnish peacekeepers have, through the decades, used this cultural asset in their co-operation with civilians in mission areas. Finnish soldiers talking with local people without wearing a helmet and having fully equipped backers aiming rifles at civilians has been a familiar sight in crisis management operations, which has sometimes irritated other troops that have very strict security rules. When I had an opportunity to serve in the UN as commander of the Nordic Battalion in Macedonia during the mid nineties, the fellow commander of the U.S. Battalion was not allowed to go closer than 300 metres to the borderline that was safeguarded by our respective battalions.[8] I had to explain my total freedom of movement to curious reviewers with the fact that nobody would care if a Finnish colonel gets kidnapped on the borderline, but abducting an American battalion commander would be world class news and thus be a much more realistic threat.

I am not provoking any unnecessary indiscretion, but pointing out how our own cultural positioning can be utilized provided that we know where we stand and the surrounding world recognizes us as harmless Finns. One of the useful Finnish sayings in this connection is "Niin metsä vastaa kuin sinne huutaa" (the forest echoes back what you shout into it). In the former hunting society all shouting into the forest may have been detrimental. Nevertheless the point was, and still is, that when showing trust you will be trusted or when showing fear you will be intimidated; by and large your own behaviour makes much of the difference.

Coming into contact with another culture will probably shake the foundations of the average person. My personal eye-opener was a winter I spent serving as a military observer in Iranian Kurdistan more than twenty years ago. During the long winter months all kinds of things were discussed with the young local soldiers who were under the full influence of Imam Khomeini's rules and eight years of war against Iraq. Once I expressed my uneasiness with the lack of toilet paper and the need to operate with commonly used sprinkling cans. My Iranian interlocutor presented a totally new viewpoint. He was openly bewildered and wondered why Westerners want to smudge their buttocks with a piece paper and avoid washing themselves in a civilized and clean manner like decent people do. This example

[8] Sokalski 2003, 131–135.

may be trivial, but it clearly illustrates how differently things can be seen and how difficult it sometimes is to decide what is right and what is wrong. Hopefully you do not find it to be too intimate when I mention that since those years I have appreciated the combination of paper and hand shower in my premises. In addition I have also tried to look at the other side of the coin in cultural matters and avoid impetuous preconceptions.

Smooth Operator?

The idea of cultural competence became very topical during the competitive eighties. The term refers to the ability to work effectively with individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, or in settings where several cultures coexist. In the course of time cultural competence has come to include awareness of one's own cultural position, an open attitude towards cultural differences, a knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and cross-cultural skills. Originally cultural competence was based on cultural knowledge, covering awareness of the cultural characteristics, history, values, belief systems, and behaviours of the members of other ethnic groups. Culturally competent individuals develop sensitivity and understanding of another ethnic group, usually involving also internal changes in terms of attitudes and values. Awareness and sensitivity also refer to the qualities of openness and flexibility that people value in relation to others.[9]

This decade has seen the rise of the term "cultural sensitivity" in European crisis management discourse. Often the term has been used when mitigating eagerness to reform other societies and plant Western practices as a part of crisis management. These voices are mainly coming from the development co-operation society, which has been exposed to cultural relativism for a long time and experienced in field work that a person's beliefs and activities should be understood only in terms of his or her own culture. Some call it "aid workers frustration"; some use the word "wisdom" and others see the idea as being extremely dangerous, particularly when they confuse cultural relativism with moral relativism in which the truth itself is relative, depending on the cultural environment.[10]

One lesson learned in development co-operation shows that a potential risk of failure will arise when desktop targets and projects are executed without any readjustment to the social and cultural reality of the beneficiary. This will lead to an underrating of the beneficiary's actual needs, demands and wishes. Allegations of international arrogance will arise if the community can not influence the process on its own or through interaction between them and foreigners. No outsider can have a clear idea of what will work best in all circumstances and in every locality. Practices and experiences do not necessarily transfer from one culture or organization to another.

During the time period following a great crises or war it may be applicable and seductive to implement extrinsic disciplines. In Iraq the coalition has tried to generate a democratic Iraq that could serve as an example to the rest of the Islamic nations. International instructors – including Finns training Iraqi police in Jordan – have built an Iraqi security structure that can control the security situation and at the same time promote ethical and democratic

[9] Regarding cultural competence see for example: http://cecp.air.org/cultural/Q_research.htm

[10] For discourse about cultural relativism see: Laitinen,A, also; http://www.cultural-relativism.com/ and http://www.gotquestions.org/cultural-relativism.html

values. However, efforts to transfer Western practices to Iraq have from the beginning been viewed as leading to potential failure in the eyes of critics.[11] Locals seem to have politely listened to what Westerners have determined is best for the Iraqi population and then gone back to their old habits of corruption, inefficiency and human rights abuses. A similar danger prevails in Afghanistan.

To strive towards a high level of cultural competence easily comes across as an egocentric and Western approach as the main motivation is result oriented. We try primarily to work out how to become more efficient actors while advancing our own aspirations. The basic idea of cultural competence is excellent, but our motivation to be smooth operators to bring about better productivity may prevent us from seeing the possibilities that other cultures have in their capacity. A direct jump from the "stone age" to the digital era may be possible, but not without developing all aspects of life. This fact is a real turn down as we seldom or never have enough resources to implement everything needed at once, thus prolonging the process and giving it the needed time is the only workable answer that we can give to our donors and impatient taxpayers.

Deep Understanding

Culture influences the relationship an organization has with its environment as well as relationships among people within an organization. Organizations that concentrate on crisis management stem from traditional peacekeeping and development co-operation, mixing the post cold war military and civilian understandings of low intensity conflicts with experiences of humanitarian and development work in peaceful situations. Recognised parallel aspirations and seeking synergy to augment the always limited recourses has motivated the birth of the comprehensive approach.

The comprehensive approach brings together different organizations and their different approaches and functions. The introduction of the comprehensive approach caused turbulence, but also in-depth understanding about peace oriented work in its all aspects. Only the economic sector is still more or less on its own as can be seen for instance in the structures of the European Union. Nevertheless, the need to deeply understand the dynamics, relationships and structures within different cultures and in the context of global economic functions and technological possibilities has become apparent.

A form of technology that seemingly has had the greatest impact on people's lives during the last two decades is the cellular phone system. The world is full of technological contrivances that are not applicable and will not be used, although some of these toys may be used by the rich elite. Cellular phones are an exception because they have rapidly spread into poor countries and can also be seen in the hands of people who have very scarce resources.

The breakthrough of the mobile phone has been explained by the service it provides. Poor people can earn benefits from owning and using cell phones. It most definitely meets social needs and at the same time it also supports the grass roots economy. Cultural studies of cell phone use, however, show that it is not the technology or the need to provide useful services

[11] William Bache (2007) as an example.

that explain the rapid spread of mobile phone systems. The key to their success is the new telephone subscriber connection, the prepaid phone card.

The possibilities to send bills or use e-invoicing in most developing countries are very limited or non-existent; Postal services are not functioning, people are homeless or not registered and even if they could be invoiced there are no reliable banking systems and recovery procedures available. The prepaid phone card was an ingenious answer to this problem and it illustrates well how you need solutions on at least three levels; in technology, which probably is not the bottleneck; in services if you only are humble enough to ask what people need, and in the end also on the level of revenue mechanisms, because nothing will work without these being in place. Do not fool yourself; development aid is an income system which functions under the same economic laws as other activities.

This simple case demonstrates the need to understand different cultures profoundly and in several respects. Human functions are deeply dependent on power and survival mechanisms that are linked to revenue systems. In Afghanistan one key answer to the existing difficulties is shifting away from dependency on the drug trade. It requires not only an economic transition plan for farmers, but also painful rearrangements among the elites who have gained power through this profitable trade.[12] Peace keeping between organized warring parties is a simple thing compared to crisis management in failed states or in areas where state building is still incomplete and power structures are not transparent.

In crises management the question of peace and war has gradually grown to cover all of society and its cultural characteristics. A comprehensive approach was developed because no political, civilian, humanitarian or military involvement alone seemed to be sufficient. Different functions and organizations are more efficient together, but the price of all this efficiency is high in terms of transparency and the need to find a common ground for organisations in spite of competition for the same resources.

The challenge of new trends

New trends are adding to the demands. Questions of impunity and the status of women[13] are nowadays tightly linked with crisis management. Finland has expressed in its Civilian Crisis Management Strategy that it aims to strengthen the role and decision making power of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace building, and to substantially increase the security of women and the factors affecting it.[14] Finnish staff members of crisis management organizations must respect local culture and social norms as long as they are not in conflict with international human rights principles and agreements.[15] This statement refers solely to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).[16] Several Islamic countries have considered the declaration to be “a secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition", which can not be implemented by Muslims without trespassing on Islamic law. As a response to the UDHR forty five foreign ministers of the

[12] Lassetter, Tom; http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2009/05/13/drug-trade-permeates-afghanistan.html
[13] UN, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva. Report 8 July 2009.
[14] Ministry of Interior 2008, 12.
[15] Government of Finland 2008.
[16] http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/

Organization of the Islamic Conference adopted the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI)[17] in August 1990 and affirmed that Islamic Sharia law is its sole source. This discrepancy and ambiguity alone puts crisis management staff into a difficult cultural position and it demands mental flexibility on their part.

Finland has declared that in the UN and in other international fora, it contributes to the fight against impunity and requires the prosecution of perpetrators of international crimes. *Extending amnesty to perpetrators of the most serious international crimes, including torture and sexual or other violence against women and girls, is unacceptable* according to the Finnish National Action Plan to implement UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.[18] This wording differs from the original UN resolution that says: (The Security Council) *Emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls, and in this regard stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible from amnesty provisions.*[19] The Finnish expression seems to extend the most serious international crimes to violence against women and girls whereas the Security Council points out that sexual and other violence against women and girls can be an element of war crime. The Security Council leaves space for considerations in amnesty provisions, whereas the Finnish approach towards amnesty provisions and conciliation mechanisms is entirely negative.

Educating girls in Afghanistan 2003. Photo: Jari Vaara

[17] http://www.religlaw.org/interdocs/docs/cairohrislam1990.htm
[18] Government of Finland 2008.
[19] United Nations Security Council 2000.

All this, as well as other virtuous efforts are very much dominant, being in line with the strict values of the EU and the rest of the Western world, but they also touch upon the sensitivities of traditional societies and cause stakeholders in these societies to fear that the International Community, represented by Western forces, will act in a culturally arrogant manner. Different interpretations of human rights, excluding amnesty provisions from peace negotiations, fighting against impunity, demand to "get the justice done" and dividing the stance on violence according to the victim's sex, reflect the hardening climate of Western thinking. The EU has, during the last decade, seen how a number of its former allies from Africa and certain Islamic countries are drifting away from the rigorous European mainstream in the UN and other global organizations.[20] This is not a good trend, especially as the Western world at the same time stretches the limits of cultural collision in Afghanistan and Iraq. The question of whether these missions will be success stories or not, will, more than ever, be dependent on a large dose of cultural competence and deep cross-cultural understanding.

The traditional peacekeeping of the United Nations was focused on questions of peace and war. Taking any position in regards to different cultural traditions or internal matters of warring parties was totally ruled out. In the present era of crisis management we have purposely accepted much more complicated tasks, including the spreading of democracy and the building of states conforming to Western traditions, values and temporal efficiency. The opposition of criticism and resistance is based on this fact. The situation calls for moral thinking that is a deeply culture bound phenomenon. The least we should demand from ourselves is to concede our aim, realise the mechanisms and understand the consequences of our activities in another culture. We need deep cultural understanding to be aware of exactly what we do in crisis management.

[20] Ahtisaari, p 14–15.

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Cultural Awareness in Historical Perspective

Helena Partanen

Introduction

Cultural awareness in crisis management is an increasingly important issue for many reasons. This is not only due to the complexity and comprehensiveness of international operations, but also to the fact that there is a clear understanding that there never can be a military solution in any conflict where international crisis management tools are used. Military, civilian, humanitarian and development tools are all closely intertwined and linked to each other. In an ideal world these tools are used in concert as a continuum, where the level of involvement and action is based mainly on the needs of the local society and authorities, and where the roles of civilian and development actors increase both in volume and in importance with the duration of the international involvement as soon as the security situation permits.

A clear definition of cultural awareness in crisis management is difficult to find. I have always been advocating the importance of definitions, as far too often different actors both nationally and internationally tend to talk past each other using the same words, but with different definitions and meanings. For decades government authorities and consultants have been talking about cultural awareness in teaching, cross-cultural cooperation and international business activities, and definitions for these are fairly easy to find. But much more seldom have we seen definitions of cultural awareness in crisis management, even though many times the need for cultural awareness has been taken up in different speeches, articles and reports.

I found three interesting viewpoints on cultural awareness in crisis management. The first one is from author Richard Mead: "That which guides people in their thinking, acting and feeling. Language, values, customary behaviours; ideas, beliefs and patterns of thinking; these attributes describe social characteristics of a people. Cultural awareness, on the other hand, of one's own and another's culture, enhances communication and facilitates positive interaction between peoples." [1]

Another interesting viewpoint can be found from the 2002 Helsinki Seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology [2] where it was stated that "When responding to crises all the issues have to be addressed – the political, environmental, social and economic impact of disasters. Cultural awareness and understanding are key to the delivery capability, particularly when communication issues can be of the highest priority and essential to successful disaster recovery."

According to the report on the Comprehensive Approach Seminar (CAS) in Helsinki in 2008 almost all speakers mentioned culture as a factor in crisis management: "Culture is an important factor", "cultural awareness is vital" or "we always have to take into account

[1] Mead 2004, 6.
[2] Seminar on Crisis Management and Information Technology 2002.

the cultural dimension". In current conflicts culture is a "factor" most leaders and actors find important – and difficult. Culture is "complex, blurred, dynamic and contextualized". Moreover, "there are no simple answers to complex questions. It is difficult to understand the importance of culture and how to deal with it … Awareness of professional knowledge mentality does not make the picture less complex, but a bit more complete. That is why teams working in crisis management need actors not only with professional expertise in military planning, technology, economics, law, medicine and other "hard" sciences, but also actors with expertise in social relations, cultural awareness and social skills in networking and teambuilding."[3]

So, one could perhaps define cultural awareness in crisis management as follows: "When responding to crises all issues … have to be addressed. But especially important is cultural awareness which enables enhancing both the understanding and communication as well as facilitating positive interaction between peoples and cultures." [4]

With this as the background and while keeping an eye on the demanding challenges we face today in international crisis management, my main focus in this article is on the international assistance in Afghanistan while asking whether past experience and history can be utilized as an instrument for international action today and tomorrow. As the Armed forces are continuously reporting on lessons learned in order to assess the reasons for success or failure and with the view of future operations, I thought that a historical perspective would be of a specific interest for this as well.

My perspective is that of cultures rising and collapsing and different cultures, religions and ways of living either co-existing side by side or struggling with each other through history. In learning lessons from the past, differences are often as valuable as similarities. What we learn from history depends entirely on how we do it.[5] Our consciousness of historical events, of both the distant and recent past, supports cultural awareness – past events impact upon present day values and, thus, present day practices.

In my article I will make proposals on how we all could do more together in order to develop a common strategy for action and goals. I will also propose means for better sharing of lessons learned. And finally look into why we should do more in terms of agreeing on a realistic level of action; realistic both from the perspective of the needs of the local society and the authorities, as well as from the perspectives of the correct allocation of international resources.

Lessons Learned from International Operations

This summer – perhaps due to the lack of real news – a discussion in Finland suddenly ballooned on why Finland and other countries are involved in Afghanistan. From the perspective which any security radar gives us, the answer is crystal clear; stability, drugs and terrorism are reasons why the international community should struggle together with

[3] Comprehensive Approach Seminar (CAS), Helsinki, June 2008.
[4] Ibid.
[5] James J. January 2005, www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/.../e.../h2cultur.pdf

the Afghan government in restoring peace and in assisting them in the development of the capabilities needed for maintaining security, as well as law and order. For Finland the decision made earlier this year by the President of the Republic and the Government and clearly supported by the Parliament, to temporarily double the amount of Finnish troops during the Afghan elections, was extremely important. These are exactly the effective means that need to be utilised in order to enhance local ownership step by step.

We often forget and omit the fact that the military is a strong – perhaps even the strongest – supporter of the development of civilian crisis management capabilities. The involvement of military crisis management should always be limited in time. The aim of the military involvement is to create optimal possibilities for the civilian and the development actors to be fully involved. And even more importantly, the role of the military is to create space, capabilities and ownership for the local authorities to act and take their responsibility. This is exactly the case of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) -operation in Afghanistan today; the military troops are critically needed to deal with the security situation, but in order to bring about a long lasting solution both civilian actors and development efforts are needed much more. Building national capabilities and the capacity of local authorities to act to improve the living conditions of their people and their security environment is crucial. For the military a long lasting involvement means a presence of years, as for the development actors it implies decades of involvement. For this reason understanding the needs of the local society and the authorities, as well as understanding the practices and priorities of the international agencies and organizations is crucially important.

The international community is mostly reacting with consensus in operations. But independent of the variety of tools or the amount of capabilities available, more emphasis should be put into developing a common strategy and goals. There is a lot more the international community could do with a more coherent and coordinated effort in crisis management. Furthermore, as all actors have gained important expertise and knowledge through the years in different tasks and different regions globally, we should aim at finding fresh and innovative solutions together for better 'lessons learned' -sharing prior, during and after any international commitment.

But the historical layers have to be delved into in order to understand the rationale and importance of the culture and thinking in international crisis management and thus also to help us in using the right tools and methods for action.

Lessons Learned from History

In order to put the issue of cultural awareness in perspective, I will plunge together with you into history. During an inspiring vacation this summer in Andalucía, Spain, an area with an overwhelming amount of history and culture, I came to think of the topic of "cultural awareness" from a somewhat different perspective.

By the Ruins of Madinat al-Zahra (Arabic: مدينة الزهراء) I am taken on a journey through time and learning about the magnificent history of this metropolis, its' grandeur

and civilisation. The Moors[6], who were religious fanatics, arrived in Spain in the year 711 under the leadership of Tariq and thus began a period of history which would shape Iberia differently than the rest of Europe, as the land adapted to a new religion, language and culture. Tariq's name lives on in many places in the present day Iberian Peninsula – including Gibr-al-tar: Tariq´s mountain. Al Andalus introduced Western Europe to paper, algebra, advanced irrigation techniques and Latin translations of many of the classic works of Greek philosophy. The Moors also introduced many new crops including orange, lemon, peach, apricot, fig and pomegranate, as well as saffron, sugar cane, cotton, silk and rice.

Today, archaeologists are full of superlatives when describing this Islamic metropolis, close to the city of Córdoba, built by the Caliph Abd ar-Rahman III starting around 940. It was a testament to Spain's proclamation in 929 that it was the true caliphate of the Muslim world. The building of Córdoba with splendour and on a hillside fit well with the Caliph's status, and was one of his measures of power, visible both to his people and to foreigners from miles away.

Madinat al-Zahra in Andalucía, Spain 2009. Photo: Helena Partanen

During the10th century the city of Córdoba had running water, paved and lighted streets, and, when large collections of books were scarce elsewhere in Europe, some 70 libraries, the biggest containing 400,000 volumes, according to some accounts. Madinat al-Zahra had 4300 marble columns, many imported from North Africa and Italy. An exquisite marble fountain in the courtyard had been imported from Syria. In about 40 years it came to be a

[6] The word Moors used for these people derives from the Latin mauri, a name for the Berber tribes living in Roman Mauretania which is located in Algeria and Morocco in our times. It, however, carries no ethnic connotation, but can be used to refer to all Muslims who once conquered the Iberian Peninsula.

city for some 14,000 inhabitants; the largest city ever built from scratch in Western Europe as a single effort, and from a single design. Travellers from all over Europe and from the East came to admire its treasures and the Caliph himself enjoyed the company of princes, poets, scientists and representatives of different religions alike. The caliphate was tolerant of other religions in the region – Christianity and Judaism – as long as the representatives of these other religions did not threaten the political powers of the Caliph. At that time the most vibrant intellectual and cultural force in Europe was rooted in Islam and the heart of Islam was in many ways rooted in Europe.

Today we seldom see this culture as it was – the most advanced at that time compared to the rule of other regions in Europe, being still in their embryonic phase. However, this magnificent city flourished only for some 80 years. Around 1010, the city was sacked by Islamic purists from North Africa who considered that the Muslim culture the city represented was far too liberal in its interpretation of the Koran. It was the Berbers – the Taliban of that time - that wiped the city off the world map for a millennium. Next year, 2010, will be the millennial of the city's disappearance.

Complex Present History of Afghanistan

Like many other individuals interested in Afghanistan, I have through the years read books and articles describing the country, its history and culture, its traditions and way of life. The captivating story that a young, former British diplomat Rory Stewart has told about his walk in Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Afghanistan is something unique. The book called "The places in between" details Stewart's 36 day walk from Herat to Kabul in January 2002, where he writes that: "… Afghanistan was the missing section of my walk, the place in between the deserts and the Himalayas, between Persian, Hellenic, and Hindu culture, between Islam and Buddhism, between mystical and militant Islam. I wanted to see where these cultures merged into one another or touched the global world".[7] Afghanistan has, throughout its turbulent history, been a melting pot or merging point of cultures. When we take this into consideration the invasions of recent history appear in a different light. Afghanistan's geographic location makes it particularly vulnerable to conquest and imposition of new ideas and cultural influences.

What happened in Europe a thousand years ago is to some extent a mirror image of what happened in Afghanistan through the years and as late as in 2000 when the Taliban destroyed the Bamiyan Buddhas that had been standing on the hillside and looking afar into the villages: "A pale brown sandstone cliff hundreds of feet high rose sheer from the northern edge of a valley broader and more fertile than I had seen since Herat. Cut into the cliffs to my left were two niches, each two hundred feet tall, with rubble at their bases. For fourteen hundred years, two large Buddhas stood in the niches. But seven months before I reached them, the Taliban dynamited the figures. This valley of Bamiyan, at eight thousand feet, was once the western frontier of the Buddhist world." [8]

[7] Rory Stewart: The places in between, 2004, 25.
[8] Ibid, 253.

Turquoise Mountain in Afghanistan was once the capital of a Silk Road empire and contained art imported from all over twelfth-century Asia. "The new colours and motifs of Iranian porcelain and the new forms in Seljuk metal would have lain alongside Ghorid innovations in architecture. We know very little about this period because, just as Genghis buried the Turquoise Mountain, he also obliterated the other great cities of the eastern Islamic world – massacring their scholars and artisans, turning the irrigated lands of central Asia into a waterless wilderness, and dealing a blow to the Muslim world from which it barely recovered. The Turquoise Mountain could have told us much, not only about Afghanistan but also about the lost glory of the whole of pre-Mongol Asia" [9]

As religion is sometimes merged with politics, we should also be using the lens of cultural awareness through which to examine the relationship between religion, insecurity and violence; political stability and military intervention, as well as human freedoms and civil society. Here we have two examples from Europe and Asia on how cultures rise and collapse and different cultures, religions and ways of living have either been co-existing or struggling with each other throughout history.

Not What – But How!

But, what we learn from history depends entirely on how we do it. This fact is linked to the topic of strategic communication which has risen in importance in many fora. Strategic communication is comprised of public diplomacy, public policy and open source military information. It is a two way street where the international action can be communicated to local people but also to politicians and public at home. A small story told by Rory Stewart from his walk through Afghanistan clearly shows how the challenges of communication work both ways: "I had heard about the men at the Changhcharan airfield in many of the villages along the way. The villagers liked them. The headman of Barra Khana, Bismillah, had said, 'British soldiers have chests as broad as horses. We wish there were more of them to keep the peace. Every morning they hood their feet over the bumper of the jeep, put their hands on the ground, and push themselves up and down on their hands two hundred times without stopping. I don't know why.' " [10]

Metrics necessary for the evaluation of both involvement and training should be further developed. I have myself been providing training on legal issues for Finnish troops and military observers in the 1980's and 1990's. I know how much effort we put then into training by having officers and civilians with practical experience from the specific operation and the region as trainers. Recently I've heard from those who have been deployed to Afghanistan that the training given in Finland prior to their deployment was to the point in describing the tasks, environment and the local conditions. Well done – trainers of today!

Another important thing where I consider the Finnish way as successful already for years is the way we put our "boots on the ground". Be it civil-military cooperation, provincial reconstruction, mobile observation teams or alike, the clear element where the Finns rise above the critical mass is the manner in which military crisis management is done where the troops are in close interaction and cooperation with the local people and local authorities

[9] Ibid, 157.
[10] Ibid, 172.

by concretely having "boots on the ground". If the military contribution can be linked with the civilian or even the development actions, the better the possibilities for lasting results in the conflict area.

When talking about cultural awareness, we should not forget that we need to venture beyond words. We should always check what definitions are used, and find the meanings of the words and the language. We all consume enough alphabet soup served daily with national and international abbreviations mixed together. I have been living abroad in the US, Norway and Sweden, and have personal experiences of these countries´ cultures. A???? Nordics are considered a family speaking "Scandinavian". I ended up as a native Finnish speaker "translating" in Nordic meetings Norwegian to the Swedes and Swedish to the Norwegians … But we also have to keep in mind that going beyond the words and definitions is important not only in international cooperation, but also in all interagency dialogue.

Far too often we hear the saying, presumably first iterated by Aldous Huxley, that what we learn from history is, we do not learn from history. So, what should we do in order to finally start learning? According to the definition of cultural awareness, used in this article, it enables the enhancing of both the understanding and communication as well as facilitating positive interaction between peoples and cultures. In creating knowledge and understanding for using the right means and methods, capabilities, and capacities in crisis management, we should, firstly share lessons learned much more widely than we do today. We should share lessons learned both nationally and internationally. Secondly, we should find more effective tools in sharing lessons learned between all actors; that is the military, civilian, humanitarian, and development actors. We should learn from each other's experiences. Here the historical perspective will naturally rise as an integral part of the big picture. There have been valuable workshops e.g. arranged by the UK RUSI and US CSIS together where all perspectives have been studied and where all international actors have been involved.

Thirdly, we should agree on a common strategy for action and end state for crisis management. As stated above the international involvement and action should always be based mainly on the needs of the local society and authorities, and where the roles of civilian and development actors increase both in volume and in importance with the duration of the international involvement as soon as the security situation permits. The realistic level of ambition from both the perspective of the local needs but also from the resources of the international community is crucial. Otherwise the commitment cannot endure, and the end-state is coloured by frustration on all sides.

Finally, I'm delighted about the FINCENT initiative to collect lessons learned and ideas for furthering cultural awareness in crisis management. Hopefully this set of articles will make all readers not only ponder, but also develop true lessons identified and lessons adopted for future development in international operations. Far too often, we are content using words like develop, strengthen, enhance, and coordinate without really looking into how these initiatives can be reached in practice. We should always be looking into the means and practical solutions and to move from rhetoric to practice. We should be careful in agreeing on a realistic level of action; realistic both from the perspective of the needs of the local society and the authorities, as well as from the perspectives of the correct allocation of international resources.

History will remain, but if we create the ability to learn from it, it could perhaps finally start affecting the future through knowledge and understanding.

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Security and Culture in Eastern African Crisis Areas

Simo-Pekka Parviainen

Introduction

All crisis situations in the Horn of Africa are interconnected. Intra-country conflicts have regional implications. Also, outside actors interfere in regional and national situations, in line with their own interests. For years the international community has been unable to solve the problems in Eastern Africa. So what is to be done? Do we want the Horn to be like this in the future? The present situation cannot be in anybody's interest in the long run. So what is the key to this enigma? As president Martti Ahtisaari has said, all conflicts can be resolved. If there is a will, there is a way. Most of the people in Eastern Africa still live in absolute poverty. In the Horn of Africa, Christianity and Islam have existed in harmony for centuries. Modern times have introduced Colonialism, and later Communism. The contemporary experience in Eastern Africa is a mixture of all these various cultural layers. Abject poverty makes democracy difficult to work – or to be more exact, high differences between incomes make democracy dysfunctional. Democracy can very easily, in these situations, slide into patronage and clientelism. Countries in Eastern Africa have witnessed the rise of the Arabian Peninsula and Asia, where economic growth has not been immediately followed by democratization. The commitment to democracy is questionable in some parts of Eastern Africa, but one can ask which comes first, poverty-reduction or democracy and are these objectives somehow in conflict with each other? Poverty leads to a diminishing of human security. Traditional culture is also jeopardized as human existence boils down to a mere quest for survival. Healing the wounds of war will require long-term commitments by all actors concerned, involving the state building processes, which may last for decades.

The Present Crisis

I would like to start by briefly outlining some of the main features of the crisis affecting the various countries in the Horn of Africa. I will take up both country specific issues, as well as political factors that cause these conflicts to spill over geographical borders.

Sudan

Judging by territory the Sudan is the biggest country in Africa and home to many cultures and ethnicities. The Sudan has recently emerged from a long civil war between the rulers in Khartoum and the tribes of the South. The country is sitting on relatively lucrative oil wealth. This wealth is currently spent on security related purposes. If the situation would allow, this bonanza could replicate the positive growth of the Arabian Peninsula, followed by side results such as women's suffrage, respect of human rights and empowerment of the youth through quality education and exposure to global trends in a positive way.

The unity of Sudan is a goal that the international community is committed to uphold. There is a good reason for this. What would be the result of separation? A functioning federal system, with checks and balances might work, keeping in mind the importance of

truth and reconciliation processes. The relevant stakeholders must clearly see the benefits of unity to make unity attractive.

We have some experiences that we can study. Of these the most positive one is that of South Africa. After the collapse of the apartheid regime, the country was on the verge of civil war, or in fact a low intensity civil war was raging. Research, however indicates, that the black middle class, which was substantial in terms of numbers saw a stake for itself in South Africa. The interests of this segment of the population had a pacifying effect on the political situation and thus played a crucial role in the road towards normalcy.

The problems in Darfur have their links to Chad, but also to relations between the North and the South of Sudan. The Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the National Congress Party (NCP) have to work bilaterally to bridge the gap of mistrust as the harmful effects of this mistrust radiate to the situation in Darfur. The inhabitants of Darfur, represented by their diverse political leaders, feel left out in the power struggle between the NCP and SPLM. Darfur is a battleground in the struggle between Sudan and Chad, reaping a terrible humanitarian toll. An additional factor that makes it all the more complex to resolve the problem is that the rulers in Khartoum and Ndjamena are manipulating groups in Chad and in Darfur to undermine each other.

Ethiopia and Eritrea

A fierce war was fought between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000. The Algiers Agreement of 2000 led to a cease-fire, but the tensions in the border remain high even now, almost a decade after the cessation of hostilities. The situation between the two counties cannot be said to be even a cold peace, we should rather call it a fragile cease-fire and proxy war. Alas, the countries are still at each others throats. This situation has negative implications for the whole sub-region as the countries try to weaken each other's position vis-à-vis other countries in the sub-region. In terms of the security situation, the balance of power is on the Ethiopian side.

Culturally the two countries are close – they share an ancient highland cultural heritage, language and customs of social life. The recent conflict has artificially cut the bonds between the peoples. For centuries the border did not exist, people used to move freely and trade was vibrant. Ethiopians know how Eritreans think and vice versa. The individuals presently figuring in the government in both countries are from the rebel movements who had a common enemy – the infamous and cruel Derg regime. The Derg[1] was the so called Provisional Military Administration Committee (PMAC), which was ultimately responsible for murdering the last Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie and establishing a military dictatorship in Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1974 to 1991. The total collapse of the Derg was a stunning victory for the Ethiopian and Eritrean rebel movements and led to Eritrean independence.

[1] Derg means council in the Amharic language.

CIMIC activities, Eritrea 2009. Photo Martti Tikka

The peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea are very close. Many families have relatives across the border, who they cannot meet. In a family centred society this is painful. The ongoing conflict is an open, slowly bleeding wound affecting the national psyches. In their hearts people wish everything would be over and normal brotherly relations could resume. In a more cynical tone the economic cost of the situation is also unbearable. Keeping thousands of troops in high readiness does not come cheap. This money would have so many civilian uses instead. Eritrea is virtually bankrupt and Ethiopia's economy is not in exactly perfect shape either.

Somalia

Somalia is a country of one people – the Somalis, who share the same language, culture and traditions. The power balance of society is marked by the clan structure. Nation-building in Somalia has been a disaster. The reasons are many and the way forward remains elusive. Somalis themselves must look in the mirror. The international community has tried to fix Somalia, but the Somalis themselves ultimately have to take responsibility of the state building, make compromises and build consensus among themselves. Many prominent Somalis inside and outside Somalia have done this, but they face insurmountable odds –civil war, a war economy, warlords, desperate youth joining militias etc. – which make the chances of getting the nation-building project on track slim. The situation has been critical for the last 20 years which is why we cannot expect stellar results in a short period of time. A ten-year peacebuilding and national reconciliation strategy might produce some results.

Somalia has become a battleground in the struggle between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Ethiopia shares a long and porous border with Somalia. The region of Ethiopia bordering Somalia is populated by Somali Ogaden clans, who share a Somali identity whilst living in Ethiopia. Ethiopians are forced to deal with this situation because Eritrea is supporting Somali groups that resist Ethiopia.

Effects on the Horn of Africa
The crises in the Horn of Africa and in Sudan and Chad radiate into neighbouring countries like Uganda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kenya has a significant indigenous Somali population and now because of problems in Somalia also a huge Somali refugee population. Uganda and DRC suffer from insurgency by Joseph Konys Lord's Resistance Army and this problem has its links to the relations between the North and South of Sudan.

On the other hand, the problems in the Central African sub-region radiate to East Africa. The DRC, unable to effectively control its territory, provides a refuge for groups, especially the LRA, which are operating also in Southern Sudan, complicating the already difficult situation there. The huge natural resources in the Central African sub-region fuel the ongoing conflicts like petroleum thrown in a fire. The UN peacekeeping operation in DRC – the MONUC – is overstretched and preoccupied with the situation in Kivus and extreme Hutu *genocidaires* still on DRC soil, who fled to DRC after the Rwandese genocide.

Towards a Culture of Healing

In war and conflict torn societies there inevitably comes a need to deal with the long-term social legacy of trauma. The preference for resolution or reconciliation is culture-specific and depends how actors in the trauma are perceived, on religious beliefs and traditions related to dealing with personal or collective loss. National reconciliation strategies, including the setting up of e.g. truth reconciliation commissions, serve as a means towards developing a culture of healing. Another vital step in starting this process is dealing with the war crimes and crimes against humanity of various political leaders. It is an initial step towards starting the long process of cultivating, nurturing and sustaining a new culture of tolerance and mutual respect in the political discourse of countries in the Horn of Africa. It is also a manner of improving the security situation in the region.

The most recent example of this is the indictment of the Sudanese president Omar Al-Bashir by the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague. The countries in the sub-region have responded negatively towards this exercise in international criminal justice. The countries view the charges as counterproductive towards the ongoing fragile peace process in the Sudan. In fact this is nothing new – after the Second World War the victorious Allied Powers tried the most prominent Nazi war criminals in Nuremberg. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, the UN set up a special tribunal to prosecute war criminals of the former Yugoslavia and also former Liberian president Charles Taylor is facing justice.

As processes of trying high calibre suspects, they attract a lot of media attention while they are going on, but when the process is over the attention dies down gradually. The real problem is, however, that these processes do not capture all war criminals. Even the Allied forces were physically unable to prosecute every single German war criminal, and on the other hand, they did not want to. Many German war criminals were never prosecuted. Especially the United States and Soviet Union needed the expertise of some of them in their emerging Cold War struggle and it was more convenient to forget the past lives of these individuals than to prosecute them. In the former Yugoslavia many victims have to come to terms with meeting their tormentors walking freely in the street. This is a huge issue, which will have to be addressed in the process of national reconciliation. The healing might take generations, like our own experience from our Civil War of 1918 has shown.

What is the role and added value of peacekeeping operations in nurturing a culture of healing? The answer varies from country to country. We have to take into consideration, that peacekeeping is meant to be a short-term solution to buy time for the peace process, national healing and reconciliation. When the operation has outlived its usefulness, it has to be immediately withdrawn. If we look at the options, we have the UN, EU, AU and also regional solutions. Each of these has their strengths and weaknesses. The UN is burdened by inertia and ineffective organizational culture coupled with confusing directions from the Security Council. The European Union has now started to implement its own crisis management operations. These operations have been very short, and so they have fulfilled the usefulness requirement. The EU has been bridging the gap in critical regional situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo at the time of the elections and in Chad, to make way for the UN blue helmets. In this the EU has been quite successful – i.e. there have been at least some limited successes.

In terms of UN peacekeeping involvement in Eastern Africa, the UN has operations now in Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A mission in Somalia is under consideration, but is very difficult to execute under the present political and security environment. The UN member states – the potential troop contributing countries – have not been as forthcoming as they should have been. Afghanistan has drawn all the interest from NATO and affiliated countries with well equipped militaries. The Ugandans and the Burundians have to be really hailed for their achievements in the difficult Mogadishu security environment. How many European nations in the present political climate in Europe would have the stomach to do the same? None, I assume.

The cold war, which lasted decades, between the West and the Soviet Union, resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union. This can be attributed mainly to the collapse of the Soviet economy. It is hard to predict when the situation will become unbearable in the Horn of Africa. Somalia has been in a state of meltdown for almost twenty years and still the situation remains unchanged. In Somalia the functional state apparatus is virtual, but it would be interesting to know how long the Eritrean economy can sail against the wind.

The international community has to be patient and not handle situations on a case-by-case basis, always as a matter of urgency without strategic consideration. The UN reform, especially of the Security Council, is essential to reverse this dynamic. But a reform of the UN is not exactly around the corner. The peril, however, is that if the UN does not reform itself, it will become obsolete, and other more vibrant international and bilateral arrangements will take its place. The international community should, in the Horn of Africa, adopt a very long-term strategy of a minimum of ten years, to promote a culture of peace and healing. We cannot expect to tally results on a yearly basis like in a modern quartile economy. Lasting peace and reconciliation takes time and there is only so much outside actors can and should do in the prevailing political environment.

Culture in Crisis Management

Striving for Balanced Approaches in Crisis Management: Reflections on Organisational Cultures

Olli Ruohomäki

Introduction

The aim of this article is to briefly discuss how certain culturally informed aspects of crisis management work affect the efficiency of the interventions concerned. The international community involved in crisis management operations is often thought of as one undifferentiated entity engaged in stabilising a violent situation and reconstructing a war-torn society. The notion that there are important cultural differences within and between the various actors has received less attention. Different organisational cultures contribute to differing understandings of what is at stake in crisis situations. There are systems of knowledge, practices and power relations involved. In particular there are different understandings as to what are the priorities and the time required to achieve the objectives. Additional factors that affect the efficiency of crisis management are the use of exclusive language (sector specific jargon) as well as international agendas and politics. In the world of finite resources and political will these different understandings can cause serious problems in meeting the common aim of stabilising the crisis situation. Some answers are offered on how to achieve a more balanced approach that takes into account the different organisational cultures of the various actors involved in crisis management work.

The Challenges of Stabilisation

One of the main objectives of international engagement in crisis situations is to stabilise the conditions to such an extent that recovery can commence. International actors involved in crisis management operations face the daunting task of coming up with solutions as soon as possible. The time pressure is often immense because of the realities on the ground. On the security front, the monopoly of force must be recovered; ex-combatants need to be disarmed, demobilised and reintegrated; light and heavy weapons need to be controlled and a police force needs to be set up. On the socio-economic front, basic humanitarian needs must be provided for; development challenges need to be identified and prioritised; physical and social infrastructures need to be rebuilt; and, refugees need to be repatriated and integrated. On the political front, temporary power sharing arrangements need to be introduced; functioning courts and administration need to be re-established; and local institutions need to be built. Furthermore, domestic and global political considerations often dictate that results must be achieved swiftly as otherwise public support will start to wane.

Is it possible to reconcile short term results with sustainable results in such situations? Does the need to come up with "quick fixes" in order to provide temporary relief

actually address the underlying causes of the conflict? Do the divergent interests of various actors involved contribute to the common aim or is there a danger that different actors actually lack a common understanding of the issues at stake and actually do more harm despite seemingly good intentions? These questions are central to most contemporary crisis management interventions and there are no simple or standard answers.

The above questions have links to the larger debate on peace-building and state-building[1]. Achieving results efficiently in a short time most often relies on external provision by international actors be they international financial institutions, UN organisations, non-governmental organisations or other actors such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Building peace is often seen as the spreading of the dividends of peace into conflict affected areas. Conflict affected populations need to see immediate tangible results of peace in the form of better security and livelihood in order for peace to start to take hold. The fact of the matter is that external provision by international actors is often done because the local capacities are weak, as in the case of Afghanistan at sub-national levels, or sometimes non-existent, as in the case of Southern Sudan.

It is worth noting that all interventions by the international community have intended and unintended consequences vis-à-vis the local society it engages with. Mary B. Anderson cites the experiences of many aid providers in war-torn societies to show that international assistance – even when it is effective in saving lives, alleviating suffering and furthering sustainable development – too often reinforces divisions among contending groups[2]. The same applies to other actors involved in crisis management.

OECD Development Assistance Committee *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations* remind us that international interventions can inadvertently create societal divisions and worsen corruption and abuse[3]. They should be based on a strong conflict and governance analysis and designed with appropriate safeguards. In addition, interventions must be judged for their impact on insecurity, conflict, poverty and domestic reform. Furthermore, it is crucial that the political economy of the conflict is well understood by the actors concerned. Such questions as who controls the resources, how they are divided, what is the logic in decision-making, how tradition affects local politics, who are the drivers of change, how are public positions filled, and so on, must be asked in order to mitigate against adverse effects of outside interventions. Often the realities on the ground are those of an informal neo-patrimonial political system[4]. This means that international actors must work through existing local and national, state and non-state structures. Working through locally legitimate institutions may enhance legitimacy of the approach and effectiveness, since the workings of these institutions are known to the local communities. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the issue of local legitimacy can at times be contested. Military actors and political analysts often emphasize the strengthening of the local political balance between contesting parties and groups and read the situation on the ground through a power analysis lens, which does not necessarily take into account all the different stakeholders that constitute local society. The views of women, children and marginalised groups can easily be

[1] OECD 2009; Ghani & Lockhart 2008; United Nations 2009.
[2] Anderson 1999.
[3] OECD 2007a.
[4] Anten 2009, 3.

forgotten in this mode of thinking and, hence, international actors must be careful to avoid assisting in the institutionalisation of structural gender and social inequity.

The author discussing the progress of the National Solidarity Programme with Istalif village leaders, Afghanistan 2008.

Assistance in crisis situations must be flexible enough to take advantage of windows of opportunity and respond to the changing conditions on the ground. At the same time, given the low capacity and extent of the multifaceted challenges, international engagement may need to be of longer duration than in normal development situations. The establishment of sustainable mechanisms of service delivery systems requires the building of local and national capacities and institutions, which almost by default require a lot of time. Often this implies an engagement of at least a decade if not more. This requires commitment, stamina and political will from all the various actors concerned.

Various Stakeholders with Different Approaches

There is a broad consensus that any successful international engagement in fragile situations needs to recognise the links between political, security and development objectives[5]. Political, security, economic and social spheres are interdependent. It is not possible to achieve success unless all these spheres are taken into account. There should be a balanced approach to addressing the multi-dimensional problems presented by the challenges in these various spheres. Failure in one sphere risks failure in all others.

[5] cf. Ruohomäki 2008.

In principle, within governments involved in crisis management operations a "Whole of Government" approach is needed, involving those responsible for security, political and economic affairs, as well as those responsible for development aid and humanitarian assistance[6]. This should aim for policy coherence and joined-up strategies where possible, while preserving the independence, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid. Coherent policies and activities may have greater legitimacy in the eyes of the local population with whom international key personnel are wishing to engage. This in turn will assist in eliciting a positive response from the local population.

However, translating these noble ideals into practice is complicated as all the different actors have different understandings of what constitutes a balanced approach. This, in turn has consequences as to how successful international engagement is and how sustainable the various interventions are. The question of culture enters the picture here because an understanding of the working culture of each relevant actor in crisis management is paramount to a successful "Whole of Government" approach.

Aiman-Smith writes that "organizational culture is a commonly held in-the-mind framework of organizational members. This framework contains basic assumptions and values. These basic assumptions and values are taught to new members as the way to perceive, think, feel, behave and expect others to behave in the organization"[7]. There are systems of knowledge, practices and power relationships involved. From this follows that one has to be a part of the group to understand the inherent assumptions and values of the organisation. They are not self-evident to those who are not part of the organisation. It is from this perspective that I approach the organisational cultures present in contemporary crisis management operations.

In crisis management operations there are individuals from security, political, humanitarian and development backgrounds. They all have their cultures at play and these can be identified at different levels. The most obvious levels are national culture and local culture, but in addition, there are policy cultures, HQ cultures, mission cultures, project cultures, profession specific cultures and administrative cultures[8]. Various stakeholders often have two or more levels of identification.

Time factor

Time is a culturally constructed concept. It is interpreted differently by different groups of people. The way people manage and prioritise time differs greatly. In crisis management operations the political agendas of various actors influence the time allocated to achieve the initiatives, programmes and individual activities. Very often the time allocated clashes with the ever shifting realities on the ground.

Ministries of Defence are generally more focused on short-term outputs that are related to the duration of a military mission. There is an emphasis on swift responses and quick wins. Equally, ministries of foreign affairs and particularly their political departments are also focused on the shorter term, that is managing crisis. This may lead to there being less attention

[6] OECD 2007b.
[7] Aiman-Smith 2004, 1.
[8] Seppälä & Vainio-Mattila 2000, 17.

placed on the longer-term aspects, and even to approaches that do not necessarily favour long-term commitments. Geopolitics and geo-economics influence decision-making.

Development cooperation traditionally engages in countries based on an understanding that change is a slow process and that obstacles are structural in nature. This implies long-term engagement with various kinds of local actors, both state and non-state, and factoring in the risk of meeting with various setbacks. In addition, development actors emphasize proper consultative planning processes and stress the time it requires to build sustainable mechanisms to manage conflict through the establishment of resilient political and service delivery systems.

Language exclusivity

In crisis management operations communication is often based on an assumption that all the actors involved have a common understanding of the language used to analyse the situation and the interventions needed. However, often there is certain exclusiveness to the language used that gives rise to identity politics to differentiate one's group from the others. When professional groups are communicating amongst themselves language exclusivity is not a problem. Problems arise when different groups come together to try to communicate with each other assuming that the others automatically understand the message. Language also reinforces certain power relations between different actors. This in turn has repercussions on whose voice is heard when decisions about the use of resources are made.

The use of jargon by one actor that is alien to other cooperation partners can for example be seen among representatives of ministries of defence who speak of "winning the hearts and minds" of local communities, Improvised Explosive Device (IED), Task Force (TF) and Regional Command (RC), or by representatives of ministries of foreign affairs who use terms like GAERC conclusions, ESDP missions and the like[9]. Development actors (including humanitarian aid workers) also use professional vocabulary that may have little meaning to other actors such as Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM), Emergency Operation (EMOP), Protracted Relief and Recovery (PRROs), national poverty reduction strategies, national development plans, country strategies, and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness[10].

International agendas and politics

International attention to various crises is also dependent on the politics of the various coalitions and alliances involved in a particular crisis situation. These are issues that are much debated in foreign policy circles. Hence, for example, Afghanistan has received much

[9] GAERC conclusions refer to the General Affairs & External Relations Council of the European Union that deals with external relations and general policy questions. The Council is composed of one representative at ministerial level from each Member State, who is empowered to commit their Government. Council members are politically accountable to their national parliaments. ESDP refers to European Security and Defence Policy which is a major element of the Common Foreign and Security Policy pillar of the European Union and is the domain of EU policy covering defense military aspects.

[10] The Paris Declaration, endorsed on 2 March 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials adhered and committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of monitorable actions and indicators. These include ownership (developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption); alignment (donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems); harmonisation (donor countries coordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication); results (developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured) and mutual accountability (donors and partners are accountable for development results) (www.oecd.org, 1.7.2009).

more attention and action by the West because of the fact that NATO is involved. Darfur, on the other hand, remains more of a concern to the humanitarian aid community.

Humanitarian actors stress the immediate needs of the people as a primary guiding principle as well as neutrality and humanitarian space in relation to operations. Humanitarian aid actors tend to distance themselves from the military. Humanitarian actors also tend to view the use of development aid by the military with great suspicion. It is also worth noting that there is often confusion between humanitarian aid and development aid. Humanitarian aid is at all times neutral and non-political. In contrast, development aid is seldom devoid of politics as the aim is to strengthen local governance structures and the legitimacy of the state at its different levels. For example in Afghanistan many actors that claim to be doing humanitarian work are actually engaged in development projects although they downplay the politics involved.

Contemporary debate on development policy also stresses state-building, which implies that the bulk of aid is geared at building the core functions of the state in providing security and justice, mobilizing revenue, establishing an environment for basic service delivery, strong economic performance and employment generation. This means channelling most of the aid resources through the state at the central level by using multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) administered by the World Bank and the UN and other instruments that aim at strengthening the government as a whole, rather than targeting specific geographical areas[11]. In addition, various instruments in the context of Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs) are widely used[12]. Consequently, this creates the debate on visibility of aid resources as many security and political actors would prefer to see their national contributions earmarked to the areas of operations in which they are active[13].

Achieving Balance

What is the way forward? How can these multiple cultures and concepts work together more efficiently? Important tools, already mentioned earlier, are having a balanced approach and coherence between the political, security, economic and social spheres. The effectiveness of these approaches can be improved by concretely focusing on differences in organisational cultures, laying bare these cultural differences and using them as a resource.

Actors need to be aware of each others values and objectives, and that they are clearly communicated when working together. Instead of a language of exclusivity, it would be constructive to strive for a shared language. Actors, in addition, need to be aware that time allocated for interventions is culturally informed and may have different political agendas.

[11] Finland has channelled aid through multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq, Sudan, East Timor, Nepal and the Great Lakes region. In the past few years the total aid through the MDTFs amounted to over 80 million Euros.

[12] Foster (2009, 9) defines SWAPs as: 'All significant funding for the sector supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, adopting common approaches across the sector, and progressing towards Government procedures to disburse and account for all funds.'

[13] Finland does channel some of its development aid through the Finnish contingent in the Swedish-led PRT in Afghanistan and through the Finnish CIMIC modality in Kosovo. However, in both cases the volumes are only fractions of the overall annual aid that is provided to Afghanistan and Kosovo.

Despite different approaches and understandings of the situation, all actors need to appreciate the fact that every actor's contribution counts and is dependent upon that of the others. It is also vital that the actors involved acknowledge and recognise organisational cultural differences, including constraints of capacity and take them into account in developing cooperation strategies. Instruments such as secondment of staff and shared training of staff on thematic issues are concrete ways of bridging the cultural gaps between various actors. In addition, joint assessments and joint monitoring missions are other important ways of raising awareness of difference in organisational culture. All these mechanisms contribute to achieving a balanced approach in crisis management operations.

A durable exit from crisis situations will be driven by the leadership and people of the countries undergoing the crisis. International actors can affect the outcome in positive and negative ways, but international engagement will not by itself put an end to crisis situations. While assisting national stakeholders in solving their security, political and development challenges, the least the various international actors must do is to make sure that there is a shared objective, a shared understanding of how to get to the objective, clear responsibilities, division of labour and appreciation of the added value and limitations of respective actors. The challenge is to create a genuine and enduring culture of cooperation among the international actors involved in crisis management so that the international engagement can be phased out smoothly and the responsibility for state-building and reconstruction can be taken over by local stakeholders. Understanding the organisational culture of the different actors is a step forward in maximising the positive impact of engagement and minimising unintentional harm.

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Cultures of Integration – from Afghanistan towards a Nordic stabilisation task force?

Oskari Eronen

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan have been perceived as a novel solution to needs of comprehensiveness and integration of efforts in the field. This article looks at the PRT experiment from the point of view of organisational cultures. It first introduces a few examples of how the PRTs are culturally interconnected to the surrounding local, Afghan national and international contexts. In more detail, it examines the interplay of various professional cultures within an integrated unit, consisting of military, development, political, police and judicial experts, for instance. Finally, the paper considers a fresh proposal by Thorvald Stoltenberg to establish a Nordic stabilisation task force and attempts to draw some key lessons to be learned from the PRTs, if such a force were established.

Problems identified and measures listed are directed to facilitate further endeavours to create integrated missions and possibly units. We need not only technical interoperability of military forces to participate in international missions, but also 'cultural interoperability' to meet the challenges of utilising a comprehensive approach to crisis management and peacebuilding. The main focus here will be on 'horizontal interoperability' among members of an integrated unit[1].

The text moves mostly at tactical-operational level, focusing on culture in crisis management. It is largely based on the author's earlier research on the PRTs, as well as personal experience working in two PRTs in Northern Afghanistan.

PRT Experiment

Provincial Reconstruction Teams operate in Afghanistan under the auspices of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). There are currently 26 PRTs covering 31 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan. Each of the teams is directed by a lead nation, the United States being a chief player through its 13 PRTs altogether. The size and composition of a PRT as well as funds available vary hugely among the units depending mostly on the lead nations' domestic policies and priorities. While the military component may be anything between a mere force protection platoon of 40 soldiers and a task force of 500, the civilian components could consist of 2–20 experts in development, policing, rule of law, agriculture, administration and diplomacy. The operation exercises genuine commanding authority on the teams only in key military activities and certain reporting routines.

[1] I follow the definition of Rubinstein et al. 2008, 540.

Since 2005 the PRT mission has been to: *"assist The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable SSR [Security Sector Reform] and reconstruction efforts"*[2].

The units are tasked to monitor, support and liaise along three "lines of operation": security, governance, and development. Lead nations have interpreted the common mission differently, resulting in an uncoordinated and inefficient network of national efforts, each limited to certain provinces. Some have put more emphasis on security, while most are focused on development through their own PRT projects. While the former cannot really be called Provincial *Reconstruction* Teams, the latter are criticised of overshadowing the local government with their extra-budgetary funds reaching even tens of millions of dollars per province.

The muddled picture is further catalysed by a mounting discussion on the need to plan for 'PRT transformation' in the more stable provinces; the local authorities should take a clear lead, military components be gradually dissolved and civilian state-building and development efforts upgraded.

The PRTs could thus be depicted as half-independently operating universal watchdogs in the Afghan provinces where the international community has been only thinly present until recently. The PRTs are not a standard tool in crisis management and peacebuilding but rather a novel ad hoc solution tailored for very specific circumstances in time and space.[3]

Various Cultural Aspects of the PRTs

The colourful mix of the PRTs in Afghanistan makes an interlaced fabric of varying organisational cultures. To study that complexity, several different research settings are plausible.

If one is interested in the *international-local* relationship, one would look at how the PRTs interact with the society surrounding them. Research questions would enquire how (well) a PRT analyses and understands its operational environment; how frequent, wide and inclusive are contacts with local people; to what extent locals are employed by the PRT; whether locals are seen as genuine actors instead of just helpless victims or evil perpetrators; and if the planning and decision making of the unit is linked to plans, priorities and expectations of the local people and government. Besides exercising cultural awareness in relationships with the local population, this line of research should also examine whether these arrangements provide the desired effects.

At a more strategic level, one could ask how possible broadening of the military coalition by inviting more Islamic countries to join ISAF would benefit communication with Afghans. Moreover, civilian experts from the neighbouring countries could help in building up the local governance. In the longer term, a truly aware and sustainable approach should entail

[2] ISAF 2009, 4.

[3] Focus of this article being in the cultural aspects and not the PRTs as such, I will not go into more details concerning the history, typologies and criticism. For more information, see Eronen 2008b and 2008a.

transfer of responsibilities from international personnel to Afghans themselves, supported by long-standing commitment to capacity building. This must include both security activities (support to army and police) and reconstruction (alignment of aid to Afghan national and provincial plans and the use of Afghan government structures to funnel aid).

A lively cultural interface can be found in relations between the *PRTs and other international organisations*. The PRTs are increasingly accompanied in the provinces by such operators as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), UN agencies like UNDP and FAO, and the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL). All these pursue missions and tasks that partly overlap with those of the PRTs. For example, UNAMA, PRTs and EUPOL are all involved in supporting police reform in Afghanistan. As in all post-conflict arenas, coordination is often called for but rarely achieved.

Presumably, barriers between the PRTs and other international organisations are not enormously high and different levels and forms of practical cooperation take place – the most critical factor being personal chemistries and possibly the PRT lead nation's style of work[4]. UNAMA ought to take the lead in general coordination, but is present only in two thirds of the provinces. How and what kind of cooperation exactly is established on the ground between these mandated actors remains a largely uncovered territory of research.

A much more frequently commented field is the *PRT-NGO/humanitarian* tension, which energises the civil-military discourse in Afghanistan. Vivid but fairly one-sided debate goes on around the role of the military in general. Critics point to the inefficient and counterproductive quick impact projects of the military that encroach on the civilian sphere and put at risk the humanitarian space, safeguarded by strict adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence[5].

After years of ignorance regarding the aid community's wishes, ISAF finally opened up dialogue in 2008 and as a result of the UNAMA-led negotiations the *Guidelines for the Interaction and Coordination of Humanitarian Actors and Military Actors in Afghanistan* were published in August 2008[6]. After that the aid community has, for example, continued the discussion on the military's use of white patrol vehicles, resulting in a military directive to ban the use of such vehicles by ISAF. In addition to practises and guidelines, the military-humanitarian collision is greatly aggravated by ruptures of communication. There are unending quarrels over terms and their definitions. Professional cultures are embodied in concepts like 'coordination' and 'partnership'.

Another cultural playground can be coined under the theme *province vs. capital*. Here attention is drawn to centre-periphery relations and respective variation in organisational cultures. Ironically, both the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF face the same kind

[4] There is anecdotal evidence indicating that interest in the PRT's cooperation with, for example, UNAMA varies significantly between the PRTs and the lead nations.

[5] See for example Save the Children 2004, Cornish & Glad 2008 or Caught in the Conflict 2009 and http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JH20Df02.html, 15.8.2009. As a side remark, it should be recognised that the heated civil-military or humanitarian-military discourse in Afghanistan gravely muddles up a decisive separation between humanitarian efforts and development. Not all NGOs in Afghanistan are humanitarian actors. As a matter of fact, most of them are involved in longer term development that directly or indirectly engages with the Government of Afghanistan and is geared up to building local capacity. As development cooperation is tied to the existing political and administrative system, it cannot be treated as wholly apolitical – as the "civ-mil critics" insist.

[6] UNAMA Civil-Military Working Group 2008.

of coordination challenges, splintered information flows and contradictions in priorities between the strategically planning centre and the provinces' improvising to cope with daily problems. The provincial level strives to deliver amidst high expectations and desperate needs, but sometimes in ways that end up being counterproductive to longer term development across the country. Both standpoints are in some way justified. For instance, the provincial governor may wish to create in his administration new offices and capabilities, which are not in line with or incorporated in the national staffing schemes and budgets – resulting in a group of unpaid and unequipped personnel, bitter and ripe for insurgent propaganda.

One of the most significant factors influencing how the PRTs are shaped and what organisational cultures are like, is *participating nations' influence upon the unit*. Therefore, studying the relationships between the PRTs and national capitals could be a fruitful research approach. This aspect of cultural awareness calls for exploration into the ways and means that contributing nations steer, guide and communicate with the PRTs. On the other hand, there are differences, discrepancies and even occasional antagonism between nations contributing to one and the same PRT.

Domestic policies and bureaucratic traditions become part of specific crisis management cultures as well as national versions of professional cultures exercised in the field. For example, the approaches to policing differ significantly even among the Europeans. Unfortunately these intrinsic national mindsets underscore an interpretation of "our PRT" in "our province". Local ownership and Afghan lead – so prevalent virtues in strategies and official speeches – are undermined as a side effect of thinking along lines of national contingents.

Finally, we may consider how *professional cultures within the PRTs* are formed and interrelated.

A Civil-Military Division?

The ISAF operation depicts the PRTs as joint, integrated civil-military organisations that implement one common stability mission with a range of different tools and resources[7]. Even if true in broad terms, the common phrase, 'civil-military', must be deconstructed in order to get deeper into the varying realities of professional cultures within the PRTs.[8]

Firstly, it is problematic to depict the two components as equals, when the military contingents greatly overwhelm the civilians in numbers and resources. Most of the units are led by a military commander[9], who may also enjoy a sizeable fund to be used for projects run by the military itself. Moreover, ISAF as a whole is a military operation, the main task of which is to generate physical security to the people of Afghanistan and reconstruction actors. Balance of resources, decision-making power and status of the two components remains one of the key debates in and around the PRTs[10].

[7] ISAF 2009.

[8] The term refers often not only to composition of the PRTs, but also to their relations with the local population. The military term would be CIMIC, Civil-Military Cooperation. Employing civil-military vocabulary, many western governments have justified their sending of troops to Afghanistan as a soft contribution to reconstruction.

[9] It should be noted though that there have been two civilian PRTs for years and a couple of other units have recently been transferred under civilian leadership, most notably the British PRT in southern Helmand province.

[10] See Eronen 2008b, 125–126.

Secondly, the standard expression 'civil-military' may not hold as much explanatory force as we are inured to believe. Civilian activities to build peace and a functioning state are certainly distinctive from military action in means, methods and concepts. A more cohesive 'civilian crisis management culture' can be said to have emerged through development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), for example. Nevertheless, the dichotomous pair, civil-military, is imperfect as to illustrating the multiplicity of the cultural field within the PRTs. It creates false polarity where all things civilian are by definition in conceptual contradiction with the military sphere. It assumes that there exists something distinctively civilian – in the shape and clarity comparable to its counterpart, the military. It follows a classic rule of definition by negation. One could ask how long does it take to become a military, and how long to become a civilian? It should be recognised that 'military' is a profession, whereas being a 'civilian' is not.

There are thus many different 'civilians' out there. They are all experts in their own fields and may differ from each other almost as drastically as from the military. There is no one civilian mindset, but many professional cultures that can be in opposition with each other too. On some occasions a civilian may find his or her opinion coinciding with that of the military and against some other civilians.

Tensions Elaborated

Civilian parts of the PRTs are composed of varying numbers of personnel and fields of expertise. All include a political officer, who is typically a diplomatic representative assigned under the lead nation embassy in Kabul, and a development specialist. While the American PRTs have been thinner in staffing, in other units there are often 5–30 civilian experts. They represent skills in, *inter alia*, development, project management, administration, agriculture, water and sanitation, policing, judicial sector and gender issues. In some occasions, an expert of civilian background is serving in military uniform.

Each of the experts draws from education, personal backgrounds and earlier experience in conflict zones. Different professional cultures shape their interpretation of the PRT mission. These cultures may to some extent be explicitly represented in standards, official guidelines and directives, but are largely implicit norms, traditions and meanings. Professional cultures impinge on concepts and terms used, working styles, and operational methodologies. Touko Piiparinen reflects his own PRT experiences through 'social optics' that create specific 'mindsets'[11]. I will attempt to identify below a few points where professional cultures play an interesting role.

First, we must acknowledge that professional cultures are not only an impediment that hampers the efforts of a unit. PRT experience shows that the various components and specialists benefit from the skills of each other. Integration generates a wider pool of expertise and resources in analysis, planning and implementation. The presence of different civilian advisors makes it more comfortable for other actors to liaise with the PRT. Culture thus forms a significant positive factor to improve operations, to bring better effect.

[11] Piiparinen 2007.

After this important precaution it has to be admitted that PRT activities have turned out to be a tremendously complicated and partly painful exercise at different levels: in the provinces, at nationwide level in Kabul, as well as in domestic headquarters. A basic fault radiates to all levels: the PRT mission is ambiguous, tasks variable and activities uncoordinated. Piiparinen concludes that with only loose external and internal guidelines, the PRTs are "left to their own devices" to organise their mission. A clash of mindsets remains possible and harmony is "ensured only by goodwill on the part of the individuals".[12]

Communication becomes a particularly critical feature, not only within the unit. Differences in style and modalities of communication directed to the higher echelons (ISAF command structure, embassies, and national capitals) create tensions. In general, the civilian actors and especially political officers exercise their own direct and not entirely transparent channels to Kabul and the domestic headquarters. Another vital level of communication takes place with the surrounding community. There is sometimes great divergence of opinion as to what should be the objectives, target audiences and substance of PRT communication. For instance, should it focus on the PRT/ISAF or the Government of Afghanistan as the vehicle of delivery in security and reconstruction? The development advisor would propose messages and channels that highlight the Afghan structures, whereas the military and political officers may be more inclined to build up the PRT's status in the short term.

Security is markedly the number one task of ISAF, mandated by UN Security Council resolutions. But what security: whose, which and how? It should be remembered that ISAF's mission to support the government of Afghanistan to exercise and broaden its control of the country[13] covers also direct support to uphold general security, and has thus led to ISAF being prepared for combat since 2006. The task has been to destroy Taliban command structures and erode its strength – to kill the enemy in simple terms. Through changes in the US administration and rotation of commanders over the last year, more emphasis seems, however, to be placed on recognising the situation through a counterinsurgency lens, which would put the people in the centre. Following key lessons learned in Iraq, the most important thing to gain is the trust of the people and to influence how they perceive their future. Therefore, security comes to mean protecting the population, instead of measuring success by the number of enemy fighters killed.[14] This goes to show that also the military culture can undergo a rapid paradigm shift – at least at the strategic level.

The PRTs are not built for fighting and their outlook on security has been wider. But also in the PRTs there has been a tendency to understand security through numerical statistics of incidents (attacks) and estimated presence of armed actors opposed to the Government of Afghanistan and ISAF. Security is thus defined and measured by the local security apparatus and the intervening force. This version of security is typically favoured by the military, but sometimes also civilian police officers. When a PRT commanding officer is asked to give a briefing on the security situation, following the standard military training he or she will lay out a map describing analysed threats and incident patterns – against the PRT itself! Police officers tend to underline more the operational situation and capabilities of the local security organisations to counter security problems. They also call for development of capabilities of the police.

[12] Piiparinen 2007, 149–155.
[13] United Nations Security Council 2001; United Nations Security Council 2003.
[14] http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf, 31.8.2009.

These more traditional concepts of security focus on direct physical, organisational and operational aspects. Other PRT experts may wish to broaden the scope further by adding other layers that build, for example, on the personal, social, economic and political sphere, and raise human rights as a security issue. Conceptually, these proposals come close to the idea of 'human security' and link the problematic situation on the ground to an effort to overcome what is called 'state fragility' (inability to guarantee security of the people and provide basic services)[15].

Analysis and planning bring about great diversity in methods and style. Information gathering, analysis and production of intelligence are always key tasks of the military. In some of the PRTs this mighty machine is bent to deal with a huge variety of 'targets' that extend well beyond the traditional expertise of the military. Military analysts are to hand over 'products' in good and effective governance, capacity building in the police force and challenges in aid flows – not to mention the enormously complex system of Afghan politics and power struggle. When specialised civilian professionals who work on these topics are located in the same PRT, some stern debates can be expected.

One distinctive trait of the military approach in the field is that it provides more a snapshot of the current situation instead of an analysis of longer term developments and trends. This weakness is greatly facilitated by short rotations of the military and sharpened by longer tours of civilian advisers. On the other hand, civilian experts too often lack tools and methodological clarity or simply energy to do proper analysis – both of which are strengths of the military. In planning both the military and development experts enjoy robust methodology, although timelines and aims differ.

Time is relative. Each professional culture sets objectives, prioritises and sequences efforts differently with regard to time. The general presumption that the military work along the shortest timeline holds true, as it should: the military operation is there to work itself out of the job as soon as possible. The military look for swift responses to counter problems met. Doing so they often pay less attention to the way things are done, which might actually be a more important effect to a capacity builder than the concrete output of the project.

It should be noted, though, that potential tensions among the other professions can emerge. Political officers seeking ways to support the build-up of local government and substitution of illegitimate sources of power might lean towards quick wins too. Cooperation between subject matter experts (police for instance) and developmentally oriented project specialists requires constant balancing between the wish to meet immediate operational needs (like lack of police equipment) and building of capacity in the longer term (like locally sustainable procurement and maintenance systems). Developmentalists think that inputs should lead through efficient outputs to sustainable outcomes.

Reforms seem to be required in order to stabilise Afghanistan and set in motion a lasting process of peacebuilding and development. Anxiety to improve sometimes nearly hopeless situations haunts the PRTs. Reforms are approached differently by the various professions.

[15] Human security widens the scope from a state-centric view to include people's security. For more information on the human security concept, see for example http://www.humansecurityreport.info/index.php, 15.8.2009 or Human Security Study Group 2007; on fragile states, see http://www.oecd.org/department/0,3355,en_2649_33693550_1_1_1_1_1,00.html, 15.8.2009.

The military in particular perceive leading figures in the local government to provide decisive leverage towards change. Provincial administrations are graded based on leadership and integrity of governors, chiefs of police and department heads. Rotten apples are filed and reported to Kabul, with an aspiration of eventual sacking by the Afghan government.

While personalities and leadership play a pivotal role in all Afghan social life and formal organisational structures are weak, reforms cannot be solely dependent on finding the right persons as such. Administrative experts and development advisors would highlight more profound institution-building that includes training, mentoring, establishment of systems of planning, staffing, information exchange and registries, infrastructure maintenance, etc. The best exit strategy for the international community may well be to work persistently with and through the sub-national government, even when it seems incompetent, inefficient and weak. State-building takes time.

A Concrete Suggestion: the Nordic Stabilisation Task Force

In this last part of the article I will twist the critical lessons identified in the PRT experiment into a Nordic setting. I will not attempt to touch all practical and political challenges in creating and operating an envisioned Nordic force – like finding consensus on a suitable crisis[16] – but look at some key issues if such a force was created.

In the summer 2008 the Nordic foreign ministers asked Thorvald Stoltenberg, a former defence and foreign minister of Norway, to outline proposals for closer foreign and security policy cooperation between the Nordic countries. A group of 10 Nordic experts was assembled to support the work that was concluded in a final report handed over in February 2009. Stoltenberg's independent report comprises 13 proposals.[17]

The paper recognises a change in the international security environment and nature of conflicts and notes that more emphasis has been placed on fragile states. Dealing with such broad and complex challenges has proved to be difficult. Under the title of peacebuilding, the first of Stoltenberg's proposals is to establish a Nordic stabilisation task force:

"*that can be deployed to states affected by major internal unrest or other critical situations where international assistance is desirable. It would be responsible for stabilising the situation and then creating an environment in which the state and political processes can function properly. It should include both civilian and military personnel. – – The task force should have four components: a military component, a humanitarian component, a statebuilding component (including police officers, judges, prison officers, election observers) and a development assistance component.*"

The PRTs in Afghanistan clearly provide an important reference point for any future civil-military force with a stabilisation task. In particular the Swedish and Norwegian led PRTs in Northern Afghanistan are a useful source of experience, from which key lessons could be identified. Both follow the originally British, stabilisation-focused and light-on-development

[16] Lack of political agreement on the use of the capability has proved to be a fundamental problem in European Battle Groups.

[17] The report is available at http://formin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=159036&nodeid=15145&culture=fi-FI, 8.8.2009.

model[18], which tends to be favoured by even the more critical opponents of the PRTs[19]. Finland has contributed earlier to both units and participates currently in PRT Mazar-e-Sharif led by Sweden. Iceland deploys development staff to PRT Meymaneh directed by Norway. Denmark partners PRT Helmand in the south, led by the UK.

Stoltenberg maintains that "the Nordic countries have demonstrated that they can handle the interactions between civilian and military components better than most other countries". One could say this has been demonstrated in the Nordic peacekeeping culture, *inter alia*, by the inborn understanding of human rights, promotion of women's rights and equity among the sexes, and strive towards local ownership and sustainability.

On the other hand, the Nordic PRTs have not been free from organisational fracture and tensions among the different professions, described in the previous sections of this article. Faults in the earlier practise must be recognised and remedied. Much is achieved by becoming aware of the interplay of professional cultures. Rubinstein and others conclude that "to achieve interoperability among themselves – – the organisational cultural differences – – need to be anticipated and harmonised in a way that results in mutually respectful and equal partnership in mission planning and implementation"[20].

Internally, it has to be clear who does what and under which leadership. Roles and responsibilities of the components and respective experts have to be carefully planned, defined and directed. A certain level of steering from above must be exercised, as a free vacuum tends to be filled with ad hoc solutions that easily create tension. If all components are to be deployed side by side, common coordination mechanisms should be organised and some form of horizontal leadership structure established: a steering group to agree on key issues, under which components should work rather independently.

Another lesson learned from the PRTs is the strength of the civilian parts. If the force's tasks spread out extensively to the local society and government, one or two advisors are simply not enough. In the PRTs, the smallest civilian components have too often ended up being mere embedded additions to the military staff. Unequal distribution of logistical, communication and other support assets (like interpreters) exacerbates confrontations of mindsets. In order to actually deliver something, the components ought to stand on their own operationally.

Even when the internal arrangements and tactics are sound, the force will not succeed if it lacks strong strategic guidance. Externally, a multi-component stabilisation force requires a clear mission with stated goals and related tasks to perform. Stoltenberg notes that the task force should be adapted to each operation and would not be a standing unit. Depending on the mission and its needs, the Nordic stabilisation task force could be deployed as a whole or in part. A basic structure based on a number of robust and rather independent components provides flexibility and modularity to better meet varying needs. This should mean that the composition of the force would be specifically tailored for each occasion, and it could

[18] More on the British-Nordic model in Eronen 2008b, 117–118.
[19] Save the Children 2004, 20.
[20] Rubinstein et al. 2008, 549.

change over time and place within a mission – something that has not been exercised in the PRTs, which have remained astonishingly stable since 2005[21].

A Nordic stabilisation task force could contribute to a larger operation under the UN, stressed by Stoltenberg, or serve under the EU, NATO or AU flag. A more peculiar solution would be a separate Nordic peace support operation, which is, resource-wise, possible only in a geographically limited area.

A formidable challenge to operating a stabilisation task force in the proposed form is posed by perceptions on the civil-military roles. Stoltenberg asserts that "an integrated approach involving cooperation between military personnel and humanitarian organisations is generally needed, as in Afghanistan and Iraq". Speaking of *integration* and *cooperation* between the military and humanitarians, and referring to Afghanistan and Iraq, is apt to trigger fierce criticism, as described earlier in this article. The presence of the Nordic PRTs has already generated debates in the Nordic countries over the role of the military in general, the link between political goals and aid, and more precisely over the practical relationships between different policy-implementing actors on the ground. Based on the established international principles and experience from Afghanistan, it is not advisable to integrate a humanitarian component to the task force at all.

The Stoltenberg report rightly acknowledges the role of education and training in preparing the ground for integrated stabilisation activities. He proposes a permanent staff to build the force, plan for recruitment and training, and organise exercises. Militarily, this function and structure, in fact, already exist in the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS)[22]. Integrated pre-deployment training tailored to each mission should be organised jointly across the components. Based on PRT experience, varying rotation cycles among military and other components, as well as smaller numbers of different civilian experts, will be a challenge.

Besides mission specific training, more general education in the comprehensive approach is necessary. Under proposal 11 (section on Nordic cooperation on military education), Stoltenberg lists actions to promote better understanding of the present-day operational environment, which requires wide coordination and cooperation among actors. These include development of integrated Nordic courses in civil-military cooperation, integrated senior management training course, and an education programme at defence college level. In Finland the newly established Centre of Expertise in Comprehensive Crisis Management is assiduously developing two courses that cover the integrated field: *Applying Human Security to Crisis Management and Peace-Building*, and *Integrated Crisis Management*. As a next step, the existing activities in the Nordic countries should be mapped, upon which basis new common arrangements could be built.

Training and education must be consistent with realities on the ground and lessons identified. Ways to boost Nordic cooperation in research, concept development and experimentation should be studied. Experience from past and ongoing operations where enhanced civil-military cooperation or integrated approaches have been applied, should be collected and

[21] More thoughts on the need to build operational variance in integrated units along the cycle of crisis management in Eronen 2008a.

[22] http://www.nordcaps.org/, 15.8.2009.

analysed – keeping in mind that this is not about repeating Nordic-style, project-oriented CIMIC exercised in the Balkans in the 1990s. The PRTs are one example. Others could be found from integrated UN missions[23].

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[23] See for example Eide et al. 2005 or de Coning 2007.

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The Challenge of Culture and Cultural Differences as Experienced in Afghanistan

Rolf Helenius

Introduction

In this article culture is defined as sets of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize separate groups of people or different organizations. The article tries to identify the environment of cultural diversity and misinterpretations of it into which people working in Afghanistan get submerged. The understanding of the variety of cultures both among the people of Afghanistan and the international organizations functioning within the country needs to be brought to the surface to make an opening of the Gordian knot of Afghanistan possible.

As complex as Afghanistan's population, with its different ethnicities, may be perceived, it only tells half of the truth of the environment on the ground. After thirty years of war and crisis, large parts of the elite of the country have migrated to foreign nations where their children have adapted to the host cultures. Some of them are returning to help in the founding of the new Afghanistan, where also the International Community with its different stakeholders acts. This leads to an environment where an uncertainty of the culture with which one tries to interact exists. Then there is the confrontation between the urban culture of Kabul with the cultures of the provinces. On top of this are the clashes between the organizational cultures of different stakeholders involved in developing an emerging Afghanistan.

The aim of this article is not only to identify the separate endemic cultures experienced in Afghanistan, but also to introduce the organizational cultures of the different stakeholders and to show why they oftentimes clash due to misunderstandings. The article tries to show areas where members of the International Community easily make mistakes by assuming that they have an understanding of Afghan culture.

Endemic Cultures in Afghanistan

At first glance Afghanistan looks like an Islamic culture. Ninety nine percent of its population is Muslim. Of these the majority (84%) is Sunni and the rest (15%) are Shiite. Religion, however is only part of the culture; much too often it is assumed that Afghan virtues are based on Islam and Sharia. The ethnic code of the Pashtun, the major ethnic group of Afghanistan which are estimated to be close to half of the country's population (42%), the Pashtunwali has a very strong influence on most of the country's population, including most of the non-Pashtun groups[1]. The other ethnic groups are Tajik (27%), Hazara (9%), Uzbek (9%), Aimak (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baloch (2%) and a variety of small groups. Even though the other ethnic groups are not bound to the Pashtunwali they have oftentimes adapted parts of it into their everyday life.

[1] www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook, 13.07.09

The ethnicities of Afghanistan can also be divided geographically where the Pashtuns are mainly located in the South and East of the country with several ethnic pockets spread throughout the country. There are also Pashtuns living in the North-West of Pakistan. The original area inhabited by Pashtuns was split during the Great Game as the Durand Line was demarcated by the British in 1893[2]. The Pashtuns have dominated Afghanistan's politics since the foundation of the first modern Afghan state in 1747 under King Ahmad Shah Durrani. The majority of the Pashtuns are Sunni Muslims. An interesting aspect is that they follow both Sharia and Pastunwali. In most cases where there is a contradiction between the norms or laws prescribed by the separate codes of law they tend to choose Pashtunwali.

The Afghan Tajiks mainly live in the Northeast of the country, as well as in and around Kabul. Even though history has forced the Tajiks to coexist with the Pashtun they have not become as dominated by the Pashtun majority as the other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. The Tajiks of the Northeast have in many cases opposed Pashtun dominance. The last example of this was during the war against the Soviet invasion and later against Taliban rule where the Northern Alliance under the rule of Afghan Tajik Ahmed Shah Masoud kept up opposition to the Soviet favoring Pastun rulers and later the Taliban movement, which also was Pashtun led.

The Hazaras, who are assumed to be offspring of the Mongols remaining in the area after GenghisKhan's invasion during the thirteenth century, also differ from most of the rest of the ethnic groups of Afghanistan by being Shia Muslims. They mainly inhabit the central highlands centered in the province of Bamiyan. The other large concentration of Hazaras is located in Kabul, where close to a third of the population is Hazara. They have been discriminated against by most other ethnic groups during the history of modern Afghanistan, mainly due to their Shia Muslim faith. During recent history, they have been aligned with the Tajik lead Northern Alliance[3].

The Afghan Uzbeks mainly live in the North of the country close to the border of Uzbekistan. They are Sunni Muslims. The connections to Uzbekistan, which became completely secular during the Soviet time, have also influenced Afghan Uzbeks into becoming more secular. They were aligned with the Northern Alliance during the struggle against the Taliban and have in Northern Afghanistan been involved in various alliances and struggles with the Tajiks[4].

The rest of the ethnic groups can be seen as splinter groups without any true significance when it comes to stabilizing the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

[2] www.britannica.com, 14.07.09
[3] www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,AFG,4562d8cf2,3f52085b4,0.html, 15.07.2009
[4] www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,MARP,,AFG,4562d8cf2,469f3a521d,0.html, 15.07.2009

Influence of the Crisis Era on Afghan Culture

The crisis era as covered in this article starts with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the pre invasion communist period and includes the period of the Taliban regime. We can distinguish two separate major influences on the population. One concerns the Afghan population residing in Afghanistan and the other relates to those parts of the Afghan population who fled from the crisis as refugees.

The communist regime in Afghanistan tried to implement communist ideals in the country. The aim of trying to establish a secular society was only reached in some of the educated parts of the urban population of Kabul and some other urban areas with universities such as Herat. The whole attempt failed in the rural areas of the country where the population lived according to their traditional ways. The attempt to establish such a state actually contributed to estranging the rural population even more than before from the central government in Kabul.

During the time of the Soviet occupation, the puppet regime set up by the Soviet occupiers kept up the ideals of secularism. This aided the mujahedeen movement in recruiting Muslim fighters from the rural areas. So, instead of creating a secular multiethnic state the Soviet Union aided in forming a strong extremist Muslim movement in Afghanistan. During the fight against the Soviet occupants Afghan ethnic rivalries were largely forgotten by focusing on a common enemy. After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 the Mujahedeen kept on fighting the remnants of the communist government of Afghanistan. After the final defeat of the communist regime in 1992 the Mujahedeen set up an interim government consisting of a fifty member ruling council with Burhanuddin Ramaani as interim president. Without a common enemy the Mujahedeen started to splinter into its original subgroups and started fighting amongst themselves between different factions[5].

During this period of internal struggle the Taliban first appeared in 1994 as a puritan Islamic Pashtu force. In September 1996 the Taliban captured Kabul and declared themselves as the government of the country. They enforced a very strict form of Sharia law on the population. At this time they controlled approximately two thirds of Afghanistan. The main resistance to the Pashtun led Taliban regime was the Northern Alliance led by Afghan Tajik Ahmed Shah Massoud. The Northern Alliance comprised several ethnicities, the main being Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara. At the end of 2001 the Northern Alliance, supported by the US, was able to defeat the Taliban, which since then has kept up a guerilla war against the present government and international community[6].

Particularly during the Taliban period of the era of crisis Afghan communities were destroyed, either as a result of the elimination of community leaders and elders, or by enforcing the Taliban Pashtunwali and Sharia based law. This, in combination with the elimination of tribal leaders, affected social and cultural norms in the different communities, affecting especially education and the female part of the population, who through the elders in their immediate family had a possibility to influence their society. The extended period of struggle

[5] www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0856490.html, 16.07.2009
[6] www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0856490.html, 16.07.2009

had lowered the level of education of the Afghan population; the effects are seen at present as extremely low literacy rates among the young and middle aged population.

If we take the beginning of the Afghan crisis period as being the Soviet invasion starting in December 1979 and partly the pre-invasion communist period, we will see that parts of the population of Afghanistan fled the country. This happened in two distinct ways, depending on the social standing of the refugees. The elite of the country started to leave for nations that provided them, their families and businesses with a more stable living environment. In the case of the lower echelons of the society, they mainly fled to neighboring countries, the main directions being Iran, Pakistan and Tajikistan, depending on which ethnic group they belonged to, with Pakistan receiving the majority of the refugees[7]. The migrants who had made it out of the country and were able to secure a living for themselves in their new countries sent back money to relatives and communities helping with the reconstruction of Afghanistan. At present, we also see returnees trying to aid in the reconstruction by taking positions in central and regional government bodies and development agencies. Strong family ties, typical of Afghan culture, facilitated this process as Afghans living in exile had received information through relatives about developments in the home country during the crisis era.

The migration of the elite happened mainly to culturally completely different environments such as countries in Europe and North America. Of course, the growing expatriate Afghan communities in their new host nations formed diasporas, but these were usually formed around nationality rather than ethnicity. The Afghan elite of the late sixties and seventies had already become westernized and lived a secular life at home, showing religious devotion when in public.

The elite that migrated have had more than thirty years to adapt to their new host nations. Their offspring which incorporate a whole generation are very much estranged from Afghan culture as it exists in Afghanistan today. The positive side of living in exile for many years is that families have the economic resources to invest into their former homeland to ease the life of their relatives. A study commissioned by the German non-governmental organization GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), shows that first and second generation Afghans living in Germany are supporting their country of origin with significant contributions[8]. The same study shows that members of the Afghan Diaspora in Germany have integrated well into their host society. The second generation of Afghan immigrants is in general well educated and attains good positions in their host society.

A challenge brought on by the crisis era is that young expatriate Afghans have an idealistic and romantic view of their ethnic and cultural background. The views held and interpretations made by young expatriate Afghans of their culture, clashes with the interpretations of their relatives, who have lived through the crisis era in Afghanistan. The clash becomes apparent in cases when expatriate Afghans return to aid in the reconstruction of the country. Returnee Afghans' values and attitudes have been shaped by the years spent in exile. Similarly, the values and attitudes of the Afghans who have endured the crisis in Afghanistan have been changed by the crisis. An example of this happening was experienced by the author while

[7] www.aisk.org/reports/diaspora.pdf, 16.07.2009
[8] www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-diaspora-communities-germany-2006.pdf, 16.07.2009

interviewing two cultural advisors on gender issues in Afghanistan. One of the cultural advisors had moved from Afghanistan to Europe as a youth at the end of the seventies, the other had lived through the crisis era in Afghanistan. Both of them were Pashtun from the Kabul region. The difference in their attitudes became apparent when the role of women in present day Afghanistan was addressed and they brought forward their views on what it is and how it should be improved. The cultural advisors who otherwise got along well became aggravated at each other and switched from English into their native tongue in a heated argument. This meant that the interview had to be stopped.

Expatriate Afghans returning to Afghanistan not only work in international organizations and non- governmental organizations, but some also take on high positions as officials in the central and provincial government structure. The fact that these officials have attitudes and views differing to those of the local population can lead to confrontations with the population which has remained in Afghanistan throughout the crisis. In most such cases returnees usually leave their immediate family (spouse and children) in their adopted new home countries. This is not only due to the relative safety of these countries but also due to not wanting to impose the Afghan role of women on the female family members. In the case of a university professor, with whom the author is acquainted, he returned to take on a demanding official position in the southern part of Afghanistan with the aim to lead his country out of the crisis. At the same time he left his wife and two daughters, both receiving academic education, in their host nation. The reason for doing this was that he did not want to impose the Afghan role of women on his daughters or wife.

Governors in Afghanistan 2009. Photo: Rolf Helenius

Culture evolves at all times. If individuals originating from the same culture live together the evolvement of the culture encompasses them all, but if they are separated into different environments it will cause the evolution process to diverge. The longer the groups are separated from each other and the greater the divergence in the surroundings where they have lived, the greater the differences will be between these individuals. The different host societies' influences on separate diasporas in separate countries will also have an influence on how the international culture of the diasporas change. This factor makes the use of expatriates separated for a long time from their original culture difficult. Also the perception of the local population on expatriates returning to their home country to aid in its reconstruction is affected by how much their views and attitudes have changed.

Kabul Versus the Rest of Afghanistan

Throughout the times of modern Afghanistan Kabul has been the capital of the country and the different factions leading the country have given it a symbolic status. This they did by proclaiming the leadership of Afghanistan whenever they had succeeded in occupying Kabul.

In most nations the views and attitudes of the urban, as opposed to the rural population, differ and most markedly this difference is seen in capital city areas. In Afghanistan history has made this difference exceptionally strong. Even before the crisis era differences between Kabul and the rural areas of Afghanistan were considerable. In contrast to the rural areas, where the population followed a traditional lifestyle incorporating old cultural values and sustaining themselves through farming and animal husbandry, Kabul, a university town with modern views and ways, had become a meeting place for the European jet set and hippies.

The population of Kabul was in general well educated and had adopted the western style of dress and manners. The economic differences between Kabul and the rural areas were large. Also the political leadership governed the country from Kabul. This, in itself, was enough to have the rural inhabitants sneer at Kabul for abandoning the traditional lifestyle with all its virtues, as they saw it. It was hard for the youth of the rural areas to enroll in the university and other institutions of higher education located in Kabul since they competed against the youth of Kabul who had better access to good schools to begin with.

Until the Taliban occupied Kabul and instigated their form of Sharia law on the city, Kabul differentiated itself as a twentieth century city in a medieval country. The Taliban period transformed Kabul to a level of development similar to that found in the rest of the country. The citizens of Kabul, which had been a true melting pot of different ethnicities, became more aware of their heritage according to ethnic belonging instead of seeing themselves simply as Afghans.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the international community started rebuilding Afghanistan, focusing mainly on Kabul and the new central government. This, once again, estranged Kabul from the rest of the country. Until very recently the main effort on stabilizing Afghanistan has been Kabul centered. The gap between the rural areas, which had became even further impoverished by the crisis era, and Kabul has become even greater. With this in mind, it is fully understandable that mistrust against the government in Kabul is very strong in the rural areas.

The effort of the reconstruction of Afghanistan started in earnest in 2001 with the international community arriving in Kabul and the formation of the Afghan Interim Authority agreed upon by the Afghan opposition leaders in Bonn (Germany) in late 2001. This was the starting point of a development process leading to the present day Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. To establish the government many deals had to be brokered between former warlords and other suspicious parties. Very few representatives of the original elected government held any formal credentials for their positions and in some cases they were not able to leave their shady pasts behind. This leads to their credibility being rather low among the population.

The shift of focus in the reconstruction of Afghanistan started gradually in 2004 and is still in progress at the time of writing this article. The situation of having a partly developed capital standing in stark contrast to the underdeveloped rural areas has left a deep wedge between the population of rural areas and the capital. This gap will be hard to overcome and the corruption on the part of the government officials does not improve the situation, even though nepotism and corruption are to a certain degree acceptable within Afghan culture.

The International Stakeholders, Their Tasks and Organizational Cultures

Culture is not only to be found in societies and ethnic groups but also in organizations. Shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that define separate groups also define different organizations.

The different international organizations (IO's) and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) that are mandated, or otherwise take part in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, represent many different such organizational cultures. In this section some of the larger ones are briefly described.

The main stakeholders in Afghanistan share a few common traits. Their leadership is centered in and around Kabul where they interact with their Afghan counterparts such as the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) at the operational level. Where possible they have sub-commands or field offices in the provinces where they interact with the regional leadership and the rural population at the tactical level.

The strongest and easiest to define organizational culture among the international stakeholders is the military culture. There are two foreign forces acting officially in Afghanistan at present with the aim of stabilizing the country, US Forces Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). ISAF as a multinational force has a strong military culture, although national traits may be found among the different contingents. The military throughout the world still has many common values, goals and practices. Most dominant are the common practices formulated in the organizational hierarchy of the military. The most easily observed of these practices are defined planning and decision making processes, as well as adherence to timelines.

The military components tend to have the most resources to establish a presence in the rural areas throughout Afghanistan. When established in an area, where they are able to fulfill their primary task of establishing a safe and secure environment, they tend to take over tasks mandated to other stakeholders if they are not in place, such as Rule of Law, and mentoring and support of the provincial government. Reluctance to hand over these tasks to the mandated stakeholders when they establish a presence in the area often leads to discontent among the other stakeholders. The reason for this stems mainly from military training where a commander who has the situation in hand will not usually hand over a function until relieved by somebody with the capacity to take over the task. The support given by the commander during the time when the mandated stakeholder comes into the area is oftentimes, by the civilian stakeholders seen as a direct refusal to cooperate.

Among the civilian IO's, the organization is not as evidently hierarchical as within the military stakeholders. The separate stakeholders such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the European Union Police (EUPOL) are very different in their structure and functioning. They share the fact that they both are mandated to perform tasks within the overall framework of reconstructing Afghanistan. UNAMA is mainly involved in supporting the setting up of a governance structure, as well as supporting relief, recovery and reconstruction of the country.

The post crisis area has seen an immense amount of NGO's working in Afghanistan. Since NGO's are not ruled by any mandate, but tend to be a variety of organizations with different aims and ways of working, this article will not go deeper into the NGO's functioning in Afghanistan.

What Does the International Presence Need to be Aware of?

As the previous sections have tried to portray, Afghanistan is a very complex environment to work in from a cultural point of view. Years of struggle, war and different ruling parties have broken down the traditional cultural system. People who left the country to avoid the fighting remember the old culture, but have in the course of time been assimilated into their host societies. The endemic populations' distrust toward the international presence makes Afghanistan a very hard environment to reconstruct and develop in a way acceptable to all involved.

The efforts of the International Community (IC) in trying to further development in Afghanistan brings to mind T. E. Lawrence's words of wisdom, "better let them come up with a solution of their own than giving them a perfect one". Despite the difficulties that the members of the IC have in understanding the thinking of the people of Afghanistan, it is nonetheless necessary for them to work through those same people in reconstructing the country. Only solutions put forward by Afghans stand a chance of acceptance by a people suspicious of everything foreign. After all, it is they who have to live with the system after the members of the IC have left for their own home countries when their tours are over.

The understanding by the IC of the Afghan culture has become more complex since it has evolved and devolved into the state it is now. It is impossible to find individuals who can work as cultural advisors with knowledge of all the aspects of the varying cultures in existence throughout Afghanistan. To find suitable cultural advisors it therefore is advisable to find personnel that are culturally adept rather than to look for individuals who are experts on Afghan culture. These culturally adept advisors have an easier time understanding the present culture of the region they are working in since they lack prejudices on how the culture should be or has been.

The members of the different lead organizations represented throughout the country need to understand that what seems sensible in Kabul may not be perceived as sensible in the provinces. This makes it necessary for the headquarters of the different organizations to confer with their regional representatives before giving orders to act.

An important aspect for the IC to be aware of is their different organizational cultures, and how this interferes with the cooperation taking place between them. To avoid struggle over which organization has the lead on any certain mandated activity, the decision on handing over the responsibility needs to come from a superior level with a realistic view of the situation on the ground and the capability of the actors on the ground at the time of decision. It is, however, certain that the overall lead must come from the Afghan authorities themselves with only a supporting role from the IC.

Culture in Crisis Solution

When Cultures Meet – stories from daily life

Helinä Kokkarinen

Introduction

As it has already been said, culture is all around us as an integral part of human life, something that informs all human behavior. You just need to recognize the cultural aspects that surround you. By being curious about life and paying attention to your own behavior and that of others you will find a way to achieve real and fruitful communication with others in an international context. Cultural differences can make your work and life really complicated, but mainly the differences bring real added value to your life abroad – they are the spice of daily life. At first you are just surprised, but later it gives you a good laugh when you go through the differences and you understand what each of you have been meaning. Knowing your own culture, being familiar with the cultural habits of the mission area, understanding the body language and sense of humor of cultures other than your own are the keys to cultural sensitivity.

I started to work in Kosovo for UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) just after the peace agreement, UN Resolution 1244. The villages had been destroyed, houses burned, so many had been killed, a lot of suffering. And still, I envied their way of life; how families were taking care of their children and elderly people, how children were helping their parents, and experiencing the hospitality of poor people. When has taking care of others, helping neighbors and warmth in human relations disappeared from our society here in Finland?

My article is based on my personal experiences of working with people from various cultural backgrounds. Through my own experiences, especially in Kosovo, I have started to understand how important cultural awareness is in crisis management. Through some brief stories I hope to highlight a few useful hints on how to use the awareness of cultural difference and similarity as a resource that can facilitate inter-cultural communication. The way I understand intercultural communication in the context of the examples I present in this article is as "principles [that] guide the process of exchanging meaningful and unambiguous information across cultural boundaries in a way that preserves mutual respect and minimises antagonism[1]."

Gaining Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural awareness is the foundation of communication which involves the ability to stand back from oneself and become aware of cultural values, beliefs and behaviour. Why do we do things in a certain way? How do we see the world? Why do we react in a particular way? Cultural awareness is a means of achieving cultural sensitivity,

[1] Definition taken from Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intercultural_communication_principles, 20.08.09

which means being aware of there being cultural differences and similarities and that they have an effect on values, beliefs and behaviour. In regards to my own cultural sensitivity it has developed through various experiences in my working life.

I have had the privilege of working with refugees from different parts of the world ever since the beginning of 1980. It has been a kind of cultural awareness school for me. With and via my clients I learned that the Finnish way of doing things or thinking is not the only way of being in the world. In fact, refugees who had been forced to leave their countries of origin and who found safety in Finland, have been my trainers for future work in civilian crisis management, and especially in terms of how to recognise the cultural aspects inherent in this work. And furthermore, the refugees I worked with in Finland came from the countries where international organisations are at present running missions; Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan etc. I have always felt that refugee affairs and civilian crisis management are like two sides of the same coin.

Working side by side with local people and other international staff demands one to adopt a multicultural approach which can be gained by having experiences of meeting people from other cultures before departing to work in a crisis area. For that purpose refugees in Finland are the best possible experts in teaching cultural awareness.

While in Kosovo it was wonderful to see peacekeepers of Kosovo Albanian origin working in the Finnish KFOR battalion. That is an example we could provide to other nations involved in peacekeeping. I also had the opportunity to work with a municipal staff member who had been living as a refugee in Sweden for 17 years and working as an interpreter in an immigrations office. For me he was not only a language interpreter, but also a cultural interpreter.

Difference Lies in the Small Details

An easy way to notice and become aware of differences between cultures is to follow the everyday habits of others. How do people eat? Is it common to shake hands? Behaviour related to eating customs is something that can really create cultural clashes if you are not familiar with the habits of the area you are visiting. You also need to realize that your own eating habits are not necessarily the “best” ones.

The first refugees I met were Vietnamese people who had been selected to come to Finland from different South-East Asian refugee camps. The cultural differences could be noticed in very everyday types of activity, for instance in how to peel a banana. We are used to just opening the banana and starting to eat with the peel still half way around the fruit. What were we telling the Vietnamese by eating a banana like that? We were communicating to them that we are eating like monkeys! And surely – according to the Vietnamese – human beings should not behave like monkeys.

In Pakistan I was invited to a barbeque dinner by a Pakistani woman. The restaurant and the food were excellent and I did enjoy the evening. But little by little I noticed that the hostess was repeatedly asking me whether I enjoyed the food. I told her several times that yes, yes,

I am really enjoying myself and the food is very good. But the hostess didn't seem to be satisfied and continued asking me whether I would like to taste some more food. At the end I was finally able to figure out the reason for her behaviour. If you are not dropping food on the table around your plate, you are indicating that you are not satisfied with the food.

In early 1980 we were running a training course for immigrants in Helsinki. The participants were mainly Vietnamese females. We were having lunch in nearby restaurants and asked the students to follow our example. The food portions were normally so large that I always gave part of my food to my male colleague who had the capacity to eat a lot. After a week all the students queued up at our table and transferred half of their portions onto my colleague's plate - well, that had been the message we had given them through our behaviour. Also among Europeans there are differences in the manner one eats and what is considered appropriate behaviour. During lunches eaten with an Italian colleague in Brussels I noticed that he always left a little on his plate while I had the habit of always eating everything that was on my plate. In my Finnish home I had been raised to always eat everything or otherwise I would be punished by God. My Italian colleague, on the other hand, had been told to remember to always leave at least a little bit of food on the plate or otherwise everybody will think that you are selfish.

As everybody nowadays knows, shaking hands is not necessarily the correct greeting custom all over the world. Mainly in connection to Islam there is a prohibition regarding males and females shaking hands. In Muslim countries it is always better first to carefully watch the male hosts to see whether they are going to greet you by shaking hands. If a Muslim man refuses to shake hands it may simply be because his religious beliefs prohibit him from doing so.

Various Roles

I worked for UNMIK for more than two years in 1999–2001. Before that I had been involved with the integration of Kosovo Albanians to Finland and to the Finnish society. So, I knew something about the situation, as well as about issues relating to the culture and traditions of Kosovo.

In Finland we take for granted that there is a certain level of gender equality, and thus forget that that the role of women in other cultures can be vastly different. In Kosovo I realised that for me as a female it was a real challenge to work in crisis management which always has been understood as a world of men and the military, and, in addition I was working in a culture where women's place is in the home. But I also found that I was able to turn it into a strength. After I understood this I realised that I am my own working tool. I had to constantly keep in mind that whatever I do and however I behave it will serve as an example of what I am trying to achieve through my work. I felt that I need to be a walking example of openness and transparency; professionalism and reliability; good governance; respect for human rights; and, gender equality; in fact, the guiding principles of Finland's National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management, approved by the Finnish government in 2008.[2]

[2] Ministry of the Interior 2008.

Immediately after my arrival I was appointed by UNMIK to work as a Municipal Administrator (Mayor) in a small municipality in Western Kosovo where old traditions were still pursued. Traditionally, in the Albanian culture women have nearly no power outside the home. That area – Dugagjin area – had been strongly supporting the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) meaning that most of the civil servants in the municipality had been KLA fighters or at least supporters. When meeting these young ex-fighters for the first time, I remembered that grandmothers are the most important persons of the household and all family members are expected to pay respect to them. So, I introduced myself by saying "*I hope that you don't mind that I'm a female but please, notice that I'm an elderly lady*". My message was clear enough and it was quite wonderful to follow their reactions. The modern men of today said "*we have no problems working with a woman and secondly, you are not at all so old*". But, the implicit cultural message was clearly stating something else; that the municipality could be considered a house where I was the grandmother, the head of the household.

Later on, especially when faced with really difficult situations, I reminded my colleagues from Kosovo about this old tradition by adding some new elements to my behaviour. In Kosovo, as well as all over the Balkans, all females make handicrafts. Especially old ladies knit socks and crochet tablecloths. Knitting and crocheting are my favourite hobby, nearly a passion! I had no problems communicating with local women in the Balkans, making handicrafts into an international language everybody can understand, in spite of the fact that you are not even speaking the same language.

In late 1999 UNMIK passed a regulation stating that a municipal council should be established in every municipality. The political parties in my municipality could not reach a mutual understanding regarding how the council should be formed and it was really a challenge to find a way to reach an agreement between the parties. One evening I invited the party leaders to my residence. I was sitting on the sofa crocheting, looking at the leaders and telling them my opinions and possible ways of solving the problem. Well, in their eyes I was like a real grandmother whom they are supposed to respect – and we found the solution quite easily.

In Finland we are used to having a high level of privacy in health care. Once I became sick in Kosovo and I needed to go to the UNMIK doctor. The health clinic was situated in the Regional HQ and when I left for the clinic the security officers had most probably informed my colleagues. I had just started telling the doctor what the problem was when all my UNMIK colleagues and my interpreter rushed in. After that I didn't need to say anything. They were the ones who were discussing with the doctor, picking up the medicine from the pharmacy and carrying me home. Needless to say, I felt like a princess, getting better immediately when noticing how much they cared. Their actions communicated to me that I had the permission to be taken care of by others, that because I had entered the sick role they entered their role of caretakers.

At the beginning of my deployment I received nearly an order by the KFOR Commander to visit him as soon as possible. The reason was that he had been told by the monks that the black water well of the monastery had become full and should be emptied. There we stood the KFOR Commander, the Abbot, the monks and me behind the monastery around the lid of the well wondering what to do. During the summer of 1999 the situation in Kosovo

was far from secure. The Kosovo Albanians didn't let the monks leave the monastery, nor did they let any Albanian enter into the monastery. The international personnel did not yet have any resources to get the equipment needed to empty the well. I presented all the visible facts of the situation and asked how the military had solved the situation in their own camp. I will truly never forget the answer I received from the Commander: *"Shit belongs to civilians."* The reaction of the commander can be understood as him categorising civilians differently than military personnel.

A similar case of role categorisation occurred when our UNMIK-team, with the support of the KFOR Commander, was able to organise a meeting between the representatives of the Municipal Council and the Monastery located in the municipality. The main issue of the negotiations was land ownership around the Monastery. The first round of negotiations was successful and it was decided we would continue after a few days. In the meantime the atmosphere changed totally and the negotiations turned into a Balkan tango – one step forward, two steps backwards. During the meeting the KFOR Commander became increasingly angry and when the negotiations finished without us reaching any kind of result and he just left the room without saying anything. The following morning I met a still angry Commander who told me that he had not slept at all that night and that he had been trying to find an answer as to why I had been able to stay calm and he had become so angry with the situation. He identified three explanations for the difference in approach; 1) I am from Finland, while he is from Italy, 2) I am a woman, he is a man and 3) I am a civilian, he is of a military background. And what else could I do than agree with his explanations.

The experiences cited above made me realise that in different situations people interpret and act on situations differently depending on role identification based on such things as gender, nationality, age and professional belonging. We employ different roles to help us adapt and melt into the situation at hand. At the same time, other individuals ascribe roles to us as a way of giving us an identity and a position within a specific context, like for example the role of elderly woman, sick individual or civilian. It helps us categorise people into belonging to a certain social group, one that is something else than ourselves. Communication is simpler among people who belong to the same social group like for example people of military background communication and cooperating among themselves. Categorisation is a way of creating closeness and distance at the same time and it can lead to socially problematic situations when distant others, "strangers" are close like in a situation when civilians and military personnel need to figure out solutions to problems[3].

Administrative Culture

In Kosovo, for example, our UNMIK municipal team included persons from European countries like France, the Netherlands, and from other continents like India, Cameron, Benin, USA, Bangladesh etc. Although one may assume that administration and administrative procedures are fairly straightforward activities that all those involved have a fairly similar understanding of, the reality on the ground is often quite different. When working in international organisations, I realised that administrative and bureaucratic cultures vary between EU-countries, not to mention between countries from different continents.

[3] Gudykunst 1998, 5

During the summer of 2000, illegal woodcutting took place in our municipality. As the municipal authority UNMIK had given passed a regulation prohibiting woodcutting. I had asked my deputy to take the English, Albanian and Serbian versions of the regulation to KFOR, UNMIK Police, the Municipal Court and to international organisations for their information as soon as possible. After I returned from my leave, the KFOR Commander told me that they would have stopped some illegal woodcutters, but they did not have the Regulation. When I took up the matter with my deputy he ensured me that he had taken care of it. After a while the UNMIK Police Commander told me that they had not yet received the regulation. When I once again approached my deputy he became angry and said he had done exactly what I had told him to do and asked me to come to his office where he pointed to his desk with large piles of paper on it. I replied he had not at all followed my instructions to which he replied that *"Don't you know that there's not a single country where a higher authority is supposed to take the information to the other authorities. They are the ones who are supposed to come here and pick up the regulation."* After taking a few deep breaths I explained that in every country at least in Europe, the custom is that the information is sent to the other authorities. The lesson learned from this misunderstanding was that in our UNMIK team we from then on always went through what we understood by certain administrative words and procedures.

Putting the Lessons to Use

The main lesson I learnt from working in Kosovo was that it is only by acting as a living example of the guiding principles and values of Finland's National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management that is it possible to earn the trust of the local population. And it is only by gaining this trust that it is possible to successfully carry out the tasks of civilian crisis management missions. Intercultural communication can be improved if cooperation partners realise that we are all central working tools through which effective communication can be achieved. Below I summarise some further and selected guidelines that may hopefully smoothen one's first encounters with unfamiliar cultures.

– *Know your own culture*. By being aware of what is familiar to you it helps you recognise difference and make comparisons. It also gives you an understanding of how culture shapes us all, including yourself and defines what things are important to you and your identity. Especially in daily communication you can use examples from your own culture, such as habits and administrative procedures to facilitate communication with those from another culture. Really fruitful examples can be found in old proverbs. For example when the sun is shining and it rains at the same time we in Finland say that "the fox is getting married" while in Bosnia-Herzegovina Serbs would say that "a gypsy woman is giving birth".

– *Be curious*. Watch what others do and ask yourself why they do what they do. Try to find good local "informants" who can explain to you behaviour that you find difficult to understand. In this way you can figure out what is appropriate behaviour in various situations. People are usually pleased when an outsider is interested in their culture and are ready to provide you with explanations. It also shows that you do not want to interpret

their behaviour based on assumptions. At the same time, explain your own behaviour – why are you doing something in a different way.

– *Do not assume to know/understand why people say or do things you find are strange or would be considered strange in your own culture.* This is linked to the above hint. It also closely relates to being clear about communication, always spelling things out to avoid misunderstandings. Oftentimes people may say one thing while their body language communicates a totally different message.

– *Make use of roles.* We all have a variety of roles that are functioning at the same time. We take these roles into use when it is appropriate or necessary. When in a new culture it is helpful to think about which roles could be useful to focus on that could facilitate your entry into that culture like the role of grandmother/elderly female head of household.

The time spent in Kosovo gave me a lot and by recalling these small stories of intercultural communication incidents I am taken back to the time spent there nearly ten years ago. Now when I meet colleagues from Kosovo, whether locals or international personnel, we share common experiences and in that way we are no longer strangers to each other with our specific values, habits and behaviour. Although this may sound like a cliché, Kosovo showed me that there is a reason why we have two ears to listen with, two eyes to see with and only one mouth to speak with.

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Recognition of the Importance of Culture and Intercultural Skills – How do we move from rhetoric to practice?

Annika Launiala

Introduction

In the 1990's civilian crisis management[1] doctrines and missions started to change as missions became more multifunctional. Also, interaction between military and civilian organizations grew, as well as, an intensified contact with local culture and people.[2] In the 21st century it has been recognized that civilian crisis management missions have a much better chance of succeeding and becoming interoperable[3] when the socio-cultural context is taken into account during planning and implementation phases of the missions.[4] In this paper culture is defined as *"... an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life*." [5] Thus culture is *"a framework within which people interpret their experiences and see their own and other's action as proper and meaningful*".[6]

Recognition of the importance of culture and context has meant also changes in the profiles of the experts to be recruited into various kinds of international projects and civilian crisis management missions. Nowadays it is acknowledged that an expert should have so-called intercultural skills. According to Kealey and Protheroe[7] these intercultural skills include: 1) adaptation skills, 2) attitude of modesty and respect, 3) understanding of the concept of culture, 4) knowledge of the host country and culture, 5) relationship-building, 6) self-knowledge, 8) intercultural communication, 9) organizational skills and 10) personal and professional commitment.[8] These skills are considered important because they allow us to build trust and to improve understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, there is evidence, that many times experts are ineffective[9] in their work in different kinds of cultural contexts.[10] According to one study, only 20% of Canadian development aid workers were considered effective in their work.[11]

[1] In this paper I use the term 'civilian crisis management' although some of the original papers may have used the term 'peacebuilding'.
[2] Rubinstein et al. 2008.
[3] According to Rubinstein et al. (2009:540) interoperability means "ability to work with others in the mission and to work with local populations is essential to the mission working smoothly". Horizontal interoperability refers to interaction with various kinds of international actors in peace keeping operations and vertical interoperability refers to interaction with local population.
[4] Kealey and Protheroe 2005; Rubinstein 2008; Rubinstein et al. 2008.
[5] Clifford Geertz 1973, 89.
[6] Rubinstein et al. 2008, 524.
[7] Kealey & Protheroe 1995.
[8] See also Mol et al. 2005 and Pulakos et al. 2000 who discuss in the papers eight dimensions of adaptive performance that are: 1) handling emergencies or crisis situations, 2) handling work stress, 3) solving problems creatively, 4) dealing with uncertain and unpredictable work situations, 5) learning work tasks, technologies and procedures, 6) demonstrating interpersonal ability, 7) demonstrating cultural adaptability and 8) demonstrating physically orientated adaptability.
[9] Effectiveness is a term often used in connection to competence (Kealey 1996).
[10] See Mol et. al 2005 for a review of studies that have accessed effectiveness and job performance of expatriates.
[11] Kealey 1996.

Many of us who have worked abroad have experienced the difficulties of working effectively and getting things done, particularly during the first months. My first year working in UNICEF Malawi was difficult and challenging for several reasons. I discovered during the first week that the post I had applied for didn't exist at all and my tasks were completely different than I had expected. This caused frustration and negative feelings affecting my effectiveness at work and adjustment to the new organization and country. In addition I struggled with the UN jargon and abbreviations for months. Furthermore, hierarchy and bureaucracy in the organization caused headaches until I learnt how to get things moving through networking and investing time in getting to know my colleagues and counterparts. On top of this were Malawian cultural practices; politeness and a tendency to always agree leaving one with the feeling that there was much more to the issue, but you were not told because you were an outsider and had not yet earned the trust of the locals.

In the worst cases, experts return home after a year, not renewing their contract, because they can't get over the frustrating and agonizing feeling of inefficacy at work; nor are they happy with the local culture and people. These negative feelings can be due to culture shock,[12] but also to a lack of intercultural skills and an inability to adjust to the mission's working culture and surrounding local culture.[13] An ineffective and maladjusted expert, who in the worst case scenario returns home in the middle of a mission, is an expensive investment for an employer because of the amount of time and money invested in this person's recruitment and training. In addition it can have an adverse effect on the mission and the achievement of its objectives. In cases like this an organization needs to analyze the situation and to assess both its recruitment procedures and the quality of its training programs. Do recruitment procedures ensure that the expert is suitable both in relation to professional and personal skills? Are training programs addressing the needs of an expert concerning intercultural skills?

A lot of positive developments have occurred in the field of civilian crisis management, particularly in terms of the recognition of the importance of culture. The challenge, however, is how to mainstream culture into civilian crisis management doctrine, missions and organizations. The question asked in this paper is: *"How do we translate the acknowledgment of the importance of culture into practice?*" I explore this question from the perspective of training and capacity building of civilian crisis management experts by first investigating more closely what are the factors that make working in different cultural contexts challenging. Then I look at the factors that allow us to work effectively in a mission. Lastly, I discuss how cultural awareness issues could be taught to ensure that an expert will learn intercultural skills and their application in her/his work.

[12] Culture shock is a state of mind rather than an acute illness. It is a feeling of anxiety and stress resulting from loosing all familiar signs and symbols of social interaction in a different cultural context. A person experiencing culture shock has symptoms such as general unease, irritation to everything and towards everyone, difficulty to sleep, feeling home sick, being annoyed at local people and practices in the mission area, depression, loss of appetite etc. Some experience mild culture shock and others severe culture shock. It is a normal experience to have during a mission. (Irwin 2007.)

[13] Kealey and Protheroe 1996; Vulpe et al. 2001.

Why is Implementation of Projects in a Different kind of Cultural Context Challenging?

The Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI), which has extended experience of international projects and intercultural training, has concluded that there are seven key issues that have an impact on a project and its outcome.[14] These issues are also applicable to comprehensive and integrated crisis management missions that are based on the core idea that all stakeholders of a mission work together as equals throughout the mission cycle, namely from planning to implementation.[15]

The key issues identified by CFSI are as follows: 1) **Intercultural dialogue**, meaning genuine and sufficient two-way dialogue between international and local partners. When projects and missions are planned, objectives and activities should be designed in collaboration and in mutual understanding with local counterparts in the mission area. 2) **Jargon, concepts and work methods should be shared and agreed upon**. Many experts get frustrated when they fail to realize that they don't share work methods with their local counterparts and therefore are not able to get their message across. We should also ensure that we have a common understanding of key concepts and messages. One civilian crisis management expert working in UNAMID Sudan, for example discovered that her police colleague from one of the African countries had a different understanding of rape as a crime. One day after her presentation on human rights and gender based discrimination this colleague had told her enthusiastically that he had learnt a new thing: rape is a crime even if the woman doesn't die.[16] 3) It is crucial **to know who are the key stakeholders and beneficiaries in the mission area** in order to plan and implement meaningful projects. For example, one may ask if this is possible if a civilian crisis management expert has her office in Europe, yet her counterparts and beneficiaries are on a different continent?[17] It is also important to understand the operational and socio-cultural context, which is possible when we live in the crisis area and are in touch with the local people.[18] 4) We need **to have a shared understanding of the expected results** of a mission. This means that we need to involve stakeholders and beneficiaries, encouraging them to participate throughout the project and mission cycle, starting with problem analysis, moving on to needs assessment and the final stages of implementation and evaluation. 5) **Clear process, transparency and trust** form the fifth issue without which there is no interoperability concerning the project and the mission. 6) On top of all this comes the sixth issue, namely **the intercultural skills of an individual expert**; how well and effectively is s/he able to collaborate with international and local counterparts, as well as take into account the local cultural context. As pointed out by Sinangil and Ones: "*perhaps the most important element that distinguishes expatriate jobs from other high complexity and high responsibility jobs is an added element of complexity by the international environment in which the jobs are performe*d".[19] 7) Lastly it is important **to learn while doing** and have an iterative approach. This means that we should continuously assess

[14] Canadian Foreign Service Institute 2005.
[15] Rubinstein et al. 2008.
[16] This is an example given by Sari Rautarinta during her presentation in EU Concept Core course VIII.
[17] This is an example given by a Finnish civilian crisis management worker when I asked her about the challenges regarding her work (unofficial discussion 7.8.2009).
[18] See "Peacekeeping under Fire. Culture and Intervention" from Rubinstein (2008) for examples about limited understanding of culture and its effect on peace building operations.
[19] Sinangil and Ones 2001, 425.

and collect information on lessons learned and use that information to revise our objectives, plans and expected outcomes.

According to lessons learnt, poor functioning around any of these key issues may cause severe problems that may in the long run cause the project and the mission to fail.[20] And as Kealey et al.[21] have pointed out: "*…cultural issues are magnified in international projects which usually contain a cultural minority of expatriates with extraordinary power due to the ownership structure or their special expertise, but where the indigenous majority feel an understandable entitlement to do things their own way in the own country.*" This statement summarizes the key factors that make working in different kinds of cultural contexts challenging and more difficult than in domestic contexts, namely international and national experts with different kinds of cultural and professional backgrounds and work skills, power relationships existing between these experts, and different perceptions concerning who knows best and is the expert.

What are the Factors That Allow Effective and Successful Working in the Field of Civilian Crisis Management?

There are multiple factors that can ease adaptation to a new culture and working environment, and gradually lead to effective and enjoyable working in a mission. One of these factors is our ability to come to terms and cope with different kinds of people. During a mission we meet and work with many international and national colleagues who all have different personalities, different cultural backgrounds and different working methods and skills.

During my three years in UNICEF Malawi I had eight supervisors with different cultural backgrounds and it took time to find ways to work together with each one of them. The most difficult times I experienced were with the supervisor who was in many ways my contrast. He was a family man, a devoted Muslim from French speaking West Africa, using traditional dress, and I was young, with no children, not married but living with my partner, non-religious and supported feminist ideas. As international staff members we were supposed to share more or less similar working methods, code of conduct and a common goal, but in reality we both had strong values based on our cultural background that affected our way of working and expressing thoughts.

Eventually a major clash of values took place during my personal performance evaluation when he said that his opinion is that a woman's place is in the home, having children and taking care of the household. So what was I doing at UNICEF? He also argued that I was not liked by my Malawian colleagues, but didn't give any explanation when I asked for more details. Being insulted I reacted before thinking and judged his supervisory skills to be rather poor (which was my honest opinion at that moment) and also used the Malawians as a weapon arguing that they were only polite to him because they were scared of his rather aggressive way of communicating. I realized in a split second that I had stepped over the line and shown disrespect towards my supervisor and unless I did something to fix the situation I would be going back home much sooner than I thought and wanted.

[20] See more examples and details Kealey et al. 2005; Rubinstein 2008.
[21] Kealey et al. 2005, 292.

I decided to change my attitude and apologized, saying that I agreed with his assessments about my work performance and would make efforts to improve my weaknesses. After this experience I genuinely decided to find a way to work with him and to put aside my personal views about him and his values. I showed him the respect he deserved as a head of section and at the end of the day we actually had a very good working relationship. After we found a way to collaborate and communicate, he turned out to be quite a good supervisor. When I left Malawi he said that he had learnt to appreciate the way I get things done and keep pushing others to do their job. A valuable lesson learnt was that we all have our own cultural background that affects our values and working methods, which we need to recognize. We don't have to share the values of our colleagues, but we need to find ways to collaborate and to work together.

Another important factor that affects effective and productive working is how well we cope with uncertainties and stress. In a mission environment nothing is more certain than uncertainty. We experience stress because the surrounding environment is different, people behave differently, and it is difficult to anticipate what will happen and to accept that often nothing happens, at least in the way we want it to. We are stressed because we don't know how to behave. This experience of uncertainty and stress naturally leads to culture shock which is a crucial period in terms of adjustment to the different culture. Some decide to leave at this point and others realize and accept that they can't change the environment and the behaviour of local people; rather they need to change their own attitude and behaviour. The personal skills of an expert are a major factor in adjusting and becoming effective. Experts who have the skill to observe, analyze and sense circumstances are better off than those who just concentrate on doing things. Furthermore, an empathetic and respectful attitude towards others, interest in learning about the local culture, flexibility and tolerance are all good virtues of an expert.

The Canadian Foreign Service Institute has developed a profile of a so called Interculturally Effective Person (IEP). This profile includes three main attributes:

1. the ability to communicate with people in a way that earns their respect and trust, thereby encouraging a cooperative and productive workplace that is conducive to the achievements of professional or assignment goals;
2. the capacity to adapt his/her professional skills (both technical and managerial) to fit local conditions and constraints; and
3. the capacity to adjust personally so that s/he is content and generally at ease in the host culture

It goes without saying that the goal of any organization is to recruit experts that have a profile of an Interculturally Effective Person. Yet how many of the experts we know have IEP profile in addition to suitable professional and educational background? In Finland we have a strong sense of professional identity. Professional knowledge and expertise are considered important and most relevant in the recruitment of an expert. Yet, as evidence and experience show, without intercultural skills and understanding of the local culture, we have limited possibilities to work effectively and to achieve sustainable results. Rarely are we naturally born IEPs, therefore the challenge faced in terms of training programs is to develop training curricula that ensure that experts will acquire intercultural skills before joining missions.

How Should Intercultural Skills be Trained?

Finnish experts recruited to civilian crisis management missions undergo a two week basic training course that follows an EU training curriculum[22] and a two day pre-mission training just before they leave for the mission. The basic training course contains multiple modules varying from an introduction to crisis prevention and management, to the role of various actors, mission working environment, field work techniques, safety and security to personal health, and stress management. This course is a mixture of knowledge and practical skills needed in a civilian crisis mission, combining classroom presentations, group work and practical skills training as a training methodology. Training in intercultural skills is not trained as such, but is covered under the module on the mission working environment and cultural awareness subject and is described as follows: "*For most Mission Members the work in a Mission will involve working in a culture that is different from the one they are used to. The ability of Mission staff to operate effectively in their designated area of responsibility depends greatly on their capacity to project a professional image and adapt to the environment. Hence respect for the host society and cultural sensitivity is needed*".[23] Specific learning objectives of this module are:

1. To gain the skills to have an awareness of possible causes of conflict or tension between your/your organisation's activities and the host society;
2. To understand the possible sources of tension amongst international and national staff due to different working culture backgrounds (civilian, military, police, NGO, civil servant) and possible strategies for avoidance and/or remedy;
3. To become familiar with basic techniques to identify and overcome culture-related barriers and "cultural shock".

In addition to cultural awareness, there are subjects such as cross-cultural communication and working with national staff, gender issues and code of conduct that all are related to the issue of culture. From the perspective of the capacity building of experts in intercultural skills the module and subjects place greater emphasis on awareness and knowledge than learning and practicing intercultural skills. A good thing is that it recognizes the importance of adjustment to the environment and highlights respect and cultural sensitivity as key attributes. Nevertheless, awareness and knowledge alone are inadequate for effective working in various kinds of cultural settings and do not guarantee any changes in practices. An ultimate goal for a training curriculum is to go beyond knowledge to actual application of intercultural skills in work and everyday life. How do we achieve this? I will present four suggestions on how to transform rhetoric into practice concerning capacity building in intercultural skills in any organization working in the field of civilian crisis management.

I suggest that the first step is to reformulate the module on cultural awareness and its learning objectives to better cover issues related to intercultural skills; meaning adaptation skills, attitude of modesty and respect, understanding of the concept of culture, knowledge of the host country and culture, relationship-building, self-knowledge, intercultural communication, organizational skills, and personal and professional commitment. The emphasis should be on us and improvement of our intercultural skills. Instead of concentrating

[22] The basic training program of CMC Finland is the EU Concept Core course based on the training curriculum of Non-mission-Specific Training for EU Civilian Crisis Operations 2006.
[23] Non-mission-Specific Training for EU Civilian Crisis Operations (2006: 11).

on possible causes of conflict or tension, we should ask ourselves what are the aspects related to our professional and cultural background that may cause us to experience conflict in a multidimensional mission. We need to recognize that ethnocentrism affects the way we view the world. Because of ethnocentrism we easily forget that our way of conceptualizing and understanding the world is not universal.[24]

The second step is to perceive culture as a cross-cutting factor that affects all levels; individual, organizational, and mission level, and is further enriched and complicated by encounters with the local people and culture. Therefore the common approach used in providing cultural awareness training in an hour or two is not enough and it unconsciously suggests that we consider culture to be something separate from the experts and the mission. Culture is perceived as something 'out there', more related to the locals and their 'strange' practices in the mission area than to us. Yet, we are influenced by our own cultural background and practices as well as the organization and mission culture. To quote Rubinstein et al:[25] "*What matters in cultural encounters is not so much the surface cultural forms that are common to a society, but the underlying symbolic reasons for those forms and the cognitive and effective systems into which they are tied".* Thus culture should not be reduced into a list of stereotypical 'facts' about the way various kinds of groups deal with the world and what should be done and not done in a particular country. Cultural encounters should be seen as an opportunity to learn new things about ourselves and not as 'barriers to overcome'.

The third important step is to give voice to local counterparts and to representatives with different kinds of cultural backgrounds in the mission areas. They are the best experts on the culture and practices of the mission countries. More importantly we can learn from their experiences and perceptions of working with us, what skills to improve and how to better collaborate with various actors in a mission environment. We should involve local counterparts and representatives from mission areas both as trainers and participants in these courses because this allows a genuine exchange of views, knowledge, and ideas and allows the practicing of intercultural skills.

The fourth step, and perhaps the most important and challenging one, is that change is initiated from within the organization and from ourselves. We move from rhetoric to practice. When recruiting experts we ought to place equal emphasis on the intercultural skills and educational and professional knowledge. This means better collaboration between the recruitment and training sector, testing intercultural skills of experts as part of the recruitment procedures and developing both basic course and pre-mission training curricula with emphasis on intercultural skills. We also need to acknowledge that sometimes there are experts who are suitable in terms of educational and professional backgrounds, but have limited intercultural skills. This means that we need to find ways to improve their weaknesses and provide more tailored intercultural skills training before they can be deployed to a mission. We also need to identify experts who have the capacity to develop also in terms of intercultural skills. This is best done through joint interviews and assessments conducted by the recruitment and training sector when selecting participants to the basic training course.

[24] Ethnocentrism means evaluating other people and defining terms and concepts from one's own perspective and vantage-point, based on one's cultural values. Ethnocentric attitudes prevent us from allowing other people to be different and can form major obstacles for understanding and working in different kinds of societies and cultures (Eriksen 2001, 6–9).
[25] Rubinstein et al. 2008, 544–545.

Conclusion

A perquisite for successful and enjoyable work in a civilian crisis mission is that an expert has both suitable professional and intercultural skills that allow communication and collaboration in a respectful and trustworthy manner, as well as an ability to adapt to the host culture. Thus, the main goal in training experts is to go beyond knowledge to actual application of intercultural skills in work and everyday life. This means that we need to understand that culture is a framework within which we interpret our experiences and make sense of the surrounding world. It is a cross-cutting factor affecting the individual, organization and mission. We need to recognise that our way of conceptualising and understanding the world is not universal, and that we can and need to learn from our counterparts and beneficiaries in the mission areas. Moving from rhetoric to practice may take time, but change is possible. All we need is courage.

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Cultural Awareness in Finnish Cadets Education

Petri Toivonen

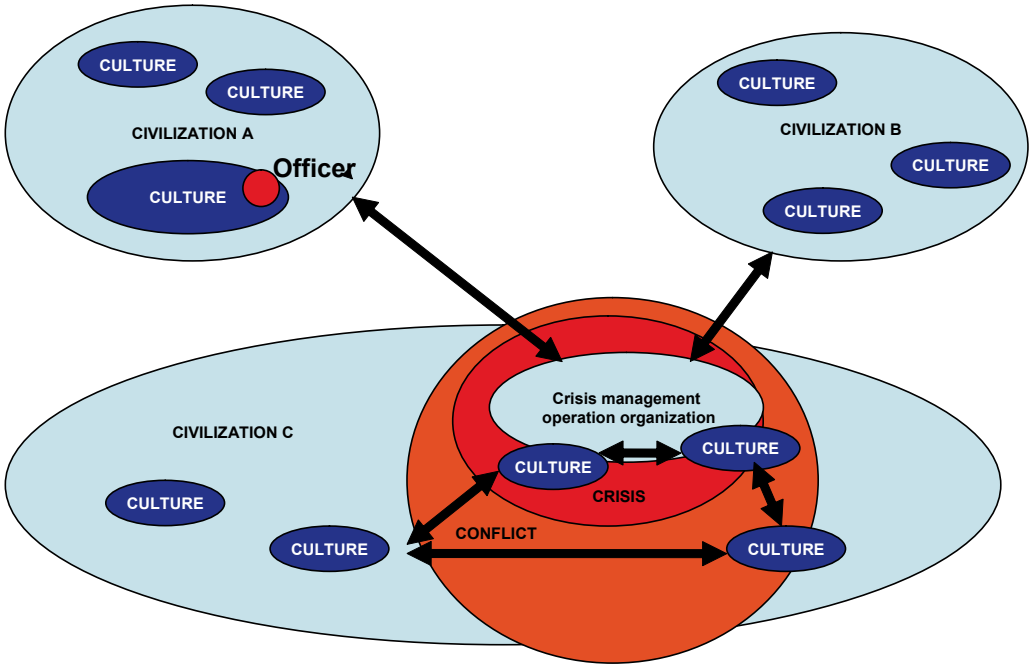
A Need to Develop Understanding of Other Cultures

Cultural awareness training for Finnish cadets has a short history which is still being shaped. In the beginning of the 21st century the main focus in crisis management education was covering the overall Finnish peacekeeping concept together with different individual skills needed in peacekeeping operations. This training covered important issues such as mine awareness, radio communications, riot control, cordon and search operations and checkpoint procedures. The main part of the education was based on the lessons learned in KFOR. Until 2004 the theoretical part of these exercises was conducted in Santahamina, Helsinki and the practical part in Pori Brigade, in Säkylä. Cooperation between the National Defence University and the Pori Brigade was very good, but as the interest for cultural awareness training has awoken so has the need to improve the actual exercise concept. Firstly, by transporting cadets from Helsinki to Säkylä and back we actually lose one vital training day of a one week exercise. Secondly, the training schedule of, and use of, the training areas at the Pori Brigade were difficult to match with the educational schedule of the cadets in a manner that would keep the disadvantages at a minimum. Thirdly, training on a vital part of crisis management operations was totally missing from the training schedule, that is, negotiation and mediation training, as well as cultural awareness education.

We need to develop our officers' understanding of other cultures. Despite the variety of operating methods used, and the fact that we are deploying troops to even more difficult operations, it is very likely that now and in the future our crisis management troops will use their different weapon systems relatively seldom. In crisis management the success of the operation is more dependent on managing cultural based understanding of information than on being adept in using weapon systems. To be able to influence and also work with and for the people in the area of operation, we need to understand the way they think, make decisions and act accordingly. Due to this, cultural awareness training for cadets started in 2004 with theory lessons about Islam. It was a good start. From that time on cultural awareness training has been modified to its present form, which still needs some improvement to further enhance our officers' readiness to face a multicultural crisis management environment. Along with different local cultures, an officer should also understand the overall cultural complexity that is present when different actors operate in crisis and conflict areas.

A Finnish officer participating in a crisis management operation is a representative of his own national culture with his or her own culture-based way of thinking and acting in different situations. Therefore, when he/she is working in a multinational crisis management organization, he/she is likely to be working with people from

different cultures. A crisis management operation is a meeting place for different cultures. A need for intercultural understanding increases further as these operations are likely to take place in other societies with various cultures, which may directly or indirectly have an effect on the operation. This cultural complexity and the need for cultural understanding is described in diagram 1. Today cadets in the Military Academy, First Degree Division have two crisis management exercises in Santahamina, which both contain cultural awareness aspects in themselves. Unfortunately on the level of post-graduate education i.e. the Senior Staff Officer Course (SSOC) and General Staff Officer Course (GSOC) components on cultural awareness training is totally lacking and within cadet education it still plays a minor role.[1]



Cultural complexity.

The Role of the Military and Cultural Awareness Training

Within training in cultural awareness for Finnish cadets, the term culture is described as something that is learned and shared between individuals, groups and generations. It works on a symbolic and structural level and is versatile in nature. This means that it is a shared way of thinking and acting for a group of people. In cadet training we have focused on differences found on the national level and in terms of ethnicity, and particularly on how different culturally based thinking affects the presumed way of reacting towards a variety of crisis management operating methods. Since 2004, due to Finland's recent participation in crisis management operations, the focus of cultural awareness training has been on the Balkans, the Middle East and Afghanistan and to a smaller degree on Africa. However, if we want to follow the strategy of the Ministry of Defence for 2025 in our cultural awareness education, we should broaden our view on training according to the areas of interest stated

[1] Toivonen 2008, 31–35.

in it. This means that we should include the variety of cultures in the Islamic world, Sub Saharan Africa and the Far East in cultural awareness training in the future.[2]

But is our own military culture ready to proceed from this initial phase and really start spending time and resources on cultural awareness training? And if so, where should our focus be within this large area of interest? There has been a lot of discussion and many articles written on culture and the necessity of transforming our Finnish military training culture so that it corresponds to the needs that the main tasks and goals of the defence forces call for. However, most of these discussions and articles have focused on our own military culture and its role in the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) in today's globalized world. Traditional threats are less likely to impact on our national security and new threats in Europe today are often non-military. However, there is still a need for a national military capacity with intercultural competence to fulfil the tasks given to the Finnish Defence Forces now and in the future.[3]

Our defence forces have three tasks at the moment which are reflected in Finnish officers' education. The first task is the military defence of Finland, which naturally receives the major part of the educational resources. The second task is supporting the authorities, and the third is participating in international crisis management. The second and the third tasks have a moderate share compared with the first one. This is the situation now. What about in the future? The other tasks may become more important in the future. Today's education makes officers very good at using direct lethal operating methods in war time situations. What about other situations in everyday life and in various crisis management operations? Preparing for the worst case scenario is rational, but being an officer is a lot more than just using firepower against your enemy.

There is an increased need for cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills when acting globally in tomorrow's world. An officer today and even more so in 2020, is, as part of regular everyday routines, involved in various multinational, and at the same time multicultural, cooperation settings taking place between the military and other organizations, governmental or non-governmental. Thus, the capability to cooperate with people from different cultural settings is needed along with war fighting skills. This becomes even more important when an officer is deployed to a crisis management operation. Unfortunately, relatively little effort has been put into changing our training culture to meet the networking needs of a comprehensive crises management environment and to understand the "strangeness" of other cultures. As General Arto Räty has written, the key to the officers' success in an operational arena is their networking skills. Thus, understanding and tolerating cultural differences has a vital role in creating an excellent relationship with your troops, superiors, neighbouring troops, the local population and its different stakeholders, civilian actors, and the media.[4]

[2] Hodgetts & Luthans 1997, 96; Hofstede 1993, 2; Schein 1987, 8–9; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997, 7–8; Puolustusministeriö 2006, 8.
[3] Halonen 2002, 47–63; Toiskallio 2002, 97–123.
[4] Halonen 2002, 62–63; Heinonen 2002, 74–79; Räty 2008, 141.

Cultural Awareness Training for Cadets Today

The exercises that cadets go through as part of their Bachelor Degree still focuses on individual officers' skills to manage the challenges of the modern crisis management theatre. However, compared to the previous concept, substantial improvement has been made by including the cultural awareness aspect not only in the theory lessons and negotiation training, but it has also been integrated into the exercise scenario of other training subjects as well. This means that cultural aspects have to be taken into consideration every time cadets run small scale operations such as check points, convoys and search operations where they meet different role-players in versatile roles. This becomes even more practice based in exercises conducted at Masters Degree level courses where cadets have to plan, conduct and lead various operations in the multicultural environment of the exercise scenario. In the planning process they have to take into account the effects of the variety of local cultures and also the challenges of working in a multinational organisation. It is in this way that respect and tolerance for cultural differences has a vital role in education. As future crisis management commanders, cadets have to understand the necessity of getting their message across to people with various cultural backgrounds, differences in thinking that are based on cultural factors, and reacting to the various actions of peacekeepers, and the importance of being able to adapt one's own behaviour to the situational and cultural setting. The aim is to develop future crisis management actors that understand cultural difference and the challenges, as well as benefits of working in a multicultural environment. Although progress has been made, we have to admit that we are still in the initial stages.[5]

Negotiation training in Santahamina 2007.

[5] Toiskallio 2002, 97; Toivonen 2008, 31–35.

As mentioned before, one aim of the current training for cadets is to highlight the importance of cultural awareness, both in terms of intercultural communication and in planning and running the operations. Referring to very positive feedback from cadets, it looks like we have been on the right track with our training. The only actual negative feedback that has been communicated is that students would have liked to have had more training on intercultural communication. The section of the training course that deals with cultural awareness in relation to intercultural communication is at present set up in such a manner that first cadets are given lessons in basic theory which supports the live exercises that they go through at a later stage of the course. The theory lessons have focused on intercultural negotiation and mediation skills. Especially the five steps of negotiation with entrée, warm up, communication, agreeing and consolidating conclusion, together with examples of cultural expectations on how foreigners should behave verbally and non-verbally in situations involving intercultural communication, are taught in the lessons. Cadets find that culturally dependent taboos, with do's and dont's, are the most interesting parts of this portion of the training course. Later during the live exercises, the theoretical information is tested in the different scenario-based intercultural negotiation and meeting tasks, where it is important to understand other people's (role players') cultural values, norms and ethical ways of behaving according to the situation.[6]

The same goes for the planning and running of different operations. In the full spectrum of exercised operating procedures cultural aspects have had as big a role to play as they have in theory and real life. While deployed in crisis management operations, the personnel always try to influence other people. In order to achieve this you have to understand the people's way of thinking and making decisions. Understanding the culture helps to understand the different possibilities of influencing them and the probable outcomes. In planning and running an operation according to tasks given by the headquarters, the choice between different methods and their probable outcomes in the short and long term have to be evaluated by the cadets involved in the planning process. Understanding local cultural norms helps them to choose between the different operational methods needed to achieve the desired end state, to protect the prestige of the crisis management organisation and to build support for the objectives of the crisis management operation. One of the exercises that cadets participate in is to plan and run an operation to arrest a key insurgency player. In connection with the arrest operation a psychological campaign and press conference to obtain support from the local population is also planned and conducted.[7]

Building cultural awareness should not be a dead end or just a matter of a few exercises that officers go through at the initial stages of their career. The basic idea of crisis management education and training for cadets has been to make it the basis of a comprehensive continuous learning programme which is adapted to the future crisis management environment. This means that cadets are given a base upon which to build their personal competence to carry out different young officers' tasks in future crisis management operations. This should then be supported by self-study according to a continuous learning ideology and respective post-graduate studies during the Senior Staff Officer Course (SSOC) and the General Staff Officer Course (GSOC). In terms of cultural awareness education it means basic training aims to give students the skills to recognize, tolerate and understand cultural differences and the

[6] Toivonen 2008, 31–35.

[7] Blatt, Long, Muthern & Pioskunak 2009, 20–23; Carroll & Gannon 1997, 15–35; Hofstede 1993, 17–40; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1997, 8–10.

effects it has on the crisis management environment. The idea of this culture-general basic training is to provide an easier starting phase for later culture-specific education in rotation training. Basic training will serve as an introductory level upon which one can build further training in cultural awareness that is modified to specific operational situations depending on the mission and task.[8]

Going Comprehensive in Facing the Future Challenges

As mentioned earlier, the need for cultural awareness, and training on it, is increasing. In the future our officers need to have more and more competence in order to perform well in various working environments in different parts of the world. They also need to adjust well personally to various cultural settings and to build interpersonal relationships in order to network effectively. To meet these officers' intercultural competence demands we need commitment, resources and cooperation to bring about a comprehensive and long-term approach in Finnish officer's education. A useful framework for building the intercultural competence of our officers could for example be based on the model presented in the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences on Cross-Cultural Competence in Army Leaders[9]. The main idea that this model is based on is that officers' training should give them the broad cultural capability to enhance their capability to adapt successfully to any cultural setting, rather than providing only traditional language and regional training. This framework thus supports the earlier idea of dividing the cultural awareness training into basic training on cultural awareness, conducted at the National Defence University from the first degree to post-graduate education, and the culture-specific continuous training conducted before the person leaves to the new cultural setting.[10]

According to the model, intercultural or cross-cultural competence is built on personal knowledge and cognition, affect and motivation, as well as personal skills. Personal knowledge and cognition is subdivided into three parts, which are (1) culture-specific awareness; (2) culture-general cross-cultural schema; and (3) cognitive complexity in officers' understanding of culture or of a particular culture which helps in interpreting personal experiences and applying this new knowledge in future intercultural situations. Affect and motivation firstly consist of personal attitudes toward other cultures using constructs such as non-ethnocentrism, tolerance, and sensitivity. Secondly, it also supports the idea of social initiative. This means motivation to engage in intercultural interactions which are found to be important both in adjusting to new cultural environments and to job performance in intercultural situations. Thirdly, affect and motivation highlights the importance of empathy in intercultural communication, which means putting oneself in someone else's shoes. Fourthly, a need for closure refers to the personal tendency to make ethnocentric attributions for behaviour. There are three dimensions for the skills presented in the model. Interpersonal skills have been recognized to be critical to how successful an individual is in working in a foreign cultural setting. These skills may include for example interpersonal skills such as conflict resolution and negotiation skills along with nonverbal communication. Of importance is the personal ability to regulate emotions, manage stress and use different

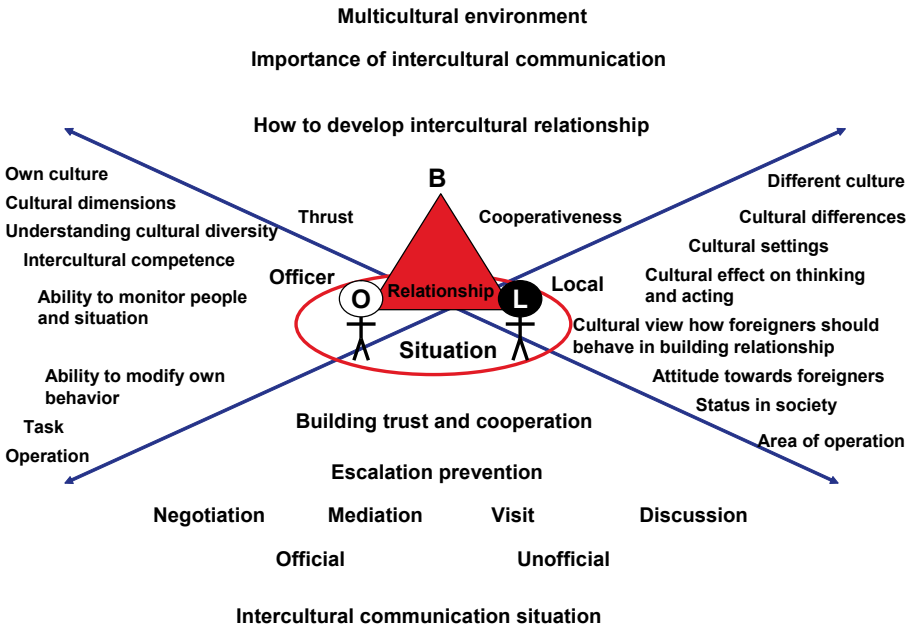
[8] Halonen, 2002, 55–56; Kimmel 1996, 189–190.
[9] Abbe, Gulick & Herman 2007.
[10] Abbe, Gulick & Herman 2007, 2.

coping strategies in the new environment or manage a source of stress. Thirdly, an officer needs flexibility to adjust his or her own behaviour in response to situational and cultural cues, which highlights the importance of the self-monitoring ability, according to Mark Snyder.[11]

The model also connects culture specific variables, such as language proficiency and regional knowledge, into the framework to support the model's culture-general approach. It also makes use of interesting antecedent variables for predicting the officer's intercultural awareness in new cultural settings. These variables are related to the officer's disposition, such as personality traits, tolerance for ambiguity and self-monitoring, as well as his or her biographical variables, like prior experience, gender and age. It also identifies the importance of self-confidence, self-concept and general well-being as important aspects of the officer's self and identity. The antecedent variables and intercultural competence with culture specific variables create a useful model for education and training of our officers, but also for measuring their competence when seen necessary. By using this comprehensive approach to cultural awareness education, the readiness of our officers would be managed in a more structural and progressive way to meet situational and organisational variables in different operations. This, in turn, would reflect positively on job performance and work adjustment, personal adjustment to the new cultural setting, including recovery from culture-shock and building of interpersonal relationships with people from various cultures.[12]

Following the idea of the comprehensive model for intercultural competence, the present education in cultural awareness could be modified to make it more effective and profitable for the individual him/herself, as well as for the organisations in need of culturally competent officers to be deployed to different tasks in challenging multicultural settings. It could create a better basis for culture-specific rotation or other training which is necessary when the actual future task and cultural environment can be indicated. For example, more effort could be put into intercultural communication education and training and the overall concept could be based on the idea presented in diagram 2.

[11] Abbe, Gulick & Herman 2007, 4–21; Snyder 1987, 1–4; Oberg 1960, 142–146.
[12] Abbe, Gulick & Herman 2007, 2–21; Lustig & Koester 2006, 73; Oberg 1960, 142–146.



Intercultural communication setting.

The idea is to enhance personal readiness to manage different intercultural situations. This means that to improve the competence necessary to create interpersonal relationships in order to support networking, an officer (O in picture) has to understand for example the cultural setting of the local (L in picture) with all the differences and needs it entails in terms of his behaviour (B in picture), which in turn creates a positive environment for intercultural interaction in various situations. Understanding this model could be beneficial for an officer in a new multicultural environment where intercultural communication competence is paramount for networking and adaptation. For Finnish officers it is important for them to understand how their own culture impacts on their behaviour and to understand and tolerate the cultural difference that they come face-to-face with in the other person or the target group. This helps him or her to monitor people and situations for cultural cues and then be able to modify their own behaviour according to a self-monitoring process to enable the individual to fulfil his or her task.

To make this comprehensive culture-general and culture-specific education and training effective, motivation is needed from the students for life-long training. It is also necessary to get support from the organization itself in providing resources, focusing scientific research to support the educational initiatives and motivating personnel by outlining the benefits of life-long training. It also requires closer cooperation between the Finnish National Defence University, FINCENT, CMC-Finland, universities and other partners nationally and internationally in information sharing, teacher exchange and concept building. The intercultural competence needed in the future officers' working environment should be developed in a comprehensive programme that includes both culture-general and culture-specific components. Training, education, and self-development should be conducted in cooperation with other organisations, in order to extend the comprehensive approach of crisis management to include the support of cultural awareness training.[13]

[13] Toivonen 2008 a, 31–35; Toivonen 2008 b.

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Culturally Confident Crisis Management – Some hints from an anthropologist

Susanne Ådahl

"As the traveller who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate lovingly, our own."

– Margaret Mead –

Introduction

The variety of understandings of what culture is and how it impacts upon the efficacy of crisis management initiatives outlined in the various articles presented in this publication attests to the fact that it is no easy task to unravel the mystery of "culture". The definitions are endless and many of us ask ourselves how to grapple with something that is everywhere, but at the same time seems to be so abstract and intangible, particularly in relation to the real problems on the ground that crisis management personnel meet daily in their work. Of course we would prefer more concrete models and tools to facilitate our work. But there are no quick-fix solutions. Ironically enough, familiarity with other cultures makes us evaluate and understand our own culture in a different manner and perhaps also to view ourselves in a new light. It can be a very gratifying learning experience.

To factor culture into crisis management in a sensible and sustainable way we need time and more time, but also open minds and willingness to truly get to the heart of the matter. And it all starts with us, with that all too familiar look in the mirror and the question: who am I and how do my values, my behaviour, my own cultural background impact on the way I meet other cultures and the people representing these cultures? And equally, how do I represent my own culture in this equation?

The force of the different is more potent than we may at first believe. For some individuals it hits them immediately when they join the mission. For others it takes time for it all to sink in. Most individuals will experience that in a new cultural setting people behave in ways that are difficult to decipher, misunderstandings ensue and there seems to be distance that is hard to bridge. What complicates this scenario is that crisis management work takes place in politically precarious situations. How we interpret people's behaviour, how we respond to this behaviour and who we get our information from can ultimately pose a security risk to the people we cooperate with and also to ourselves. We need to tread with caution and collect information from many sources, and stay tuned in to these sources so we know as much as possible. Acting on the basis of assumptions about what situations are like can be very detrimental. It is better to find out why, who and how instead of assuming.

In this publication's summarising article my aim will not be to provide a blueprint for how to mainstream cultural awareness into crisis management, but just to list some useful steps to take to enable personnel to more effectively support the stakeholders of crisis management

initiatives. I want to start with a short discussion on culture in crisis management and from there proceed to briefly outline what have been commonly identified dilemmas encountered and recommendations given by the various authors in this volume. In addition, I want to discuss some of the central terms that have been used by them; cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence or capability. How are these terms related to each other and what could be some of the first steps one could take to bring about more culturally confident crisis management?

Culture in Crisis Management

The concept of culture has given rise to a lot of debate among anthropologists. A plethora of definitions exist and it would not be constructive to attempt to recap all the different ways in which the term has been understood. I will here borrow the definition used by Robert Rubinstein, an anthropologist who has conducted extensive research on peacekeeping[1]:

"Culture is a dynamic, symbolically-based, and learned system. It forms the mechanism through which people construct and enact meaning…It does this by enabling members of a social group to construct a particular sense of reality. Based on this image of the world people: (1) base expectations about what motivates others; (2) learn the "correct" way of responding to challenges in their environment; and (3) develop emotional responses to their experiences…People acquire their cultural knowledge through observation and activity… Culture is learned through practice – "by doing". Cultural models are manifest through the practices of a group. Practice, in this sense, consists of four mechanisms: language, symbols, rituals, and behavioural models."[2]

In short, culture is born in values shared through interaction between individuals - it allows us to adapt to our environment and it delineates what is accepted behaviour in society. Culture is a window through which we view the world. When thinking of culture in crisis management it is useful to do so in terms of levels of culture, the most obvious being those of national culture, professional culture (be it military or civilian) and organisational culture (missions, projects, teams). It can also be approached by stripping reality down to the bare facts by looking at the value and meanings of (1) Actions; when is something done, who does it, how is it evaluated? (2) Narratives; what is said about events and aspirations (3) External symbols; dress, ceremonies, flags, badges, logos, signs; and (4) Communication; who says what to whom, who has the right to speak for and represent others?[3]

In recent years the issue of cultural awareness in crisis management has been put on the agenda and has resulted in a number of seminars, articles and reports. Within academic circles research on culture and crisis management is a gradually growing field of interest.[4] What still seems to dog this whole endeavour is finding an operational concept that easily translates abstract theories into practical guidelines for behaviour and practice. This is a project in the making with many turns and potholes in the road ahead. As has been mentioned already by

[1] Although Rubinstein uses the term peacekeeping I interpret it as being sufficiently similar to crisis management to use it synonymously in the context of this article.
[2] Rubinstein 2003, 30–31.
[3] Rubinstein 2005.
[4] See Rubinstein (2008) for more examples on anthropologists working in this area.

several contributors to this volume, what is important to keep in mind is that culture within crisis management work, whether it is in the planning and implementation of projects or in capacity building of personnel, cannot be applied in a "cut-and-paste" manner. It needs to fit hand-in-glove with the comprehensive approach, as a cross-cutting concept that follows through at all levels of activity throughout process and project cycles.

The majority of the contributors to this volume have used the term cultural awareness[5], and some also used the terms cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. In essence it is a matter of stages of knowledge and consciousness. In a Joint Doctrine Note from 2009 the British Ministry of Defence has outlined cultural capability as "the ability to understand culture, and to apply this knowledge to effectively engage in any environment."[6] In literature dealing with cultural competence, mainly in health care, cultural competence has, by one author, been described as something that "emphasises the ability to function effectively with members of different groups through cultural awareness and sensitivity."[7] Implied in these definitions is the idea of levels or degrees where one first becomes aware of or sensitive to cultural difference and the way culture impacts on beliefs, values and practices. The next step of development is a deeper understanding of the role of culture and the impact it has on practice. Lastly one reaches the level of competence where comprehension of culture is translated into an ability to apply this knowledge so that one's own practices are changed as a result of this consciousness. A more hands-on, simplified definition of cultural competence is "looking for, reflecting on and learning from new and sometimes challenging ideas to improve the effectiveness of your work."[8] Here applies the same challenges as those faced in relation to the concept of culture; how are we to operationalise cultural competence? How to apply it in practice?

Challenges and Recommendations Identified

Each nation or agency comes to the crisis management operation with its own political and cultural background, its own understanding of the conflict situation and its own approaches and techniques. In addition, each professional forming part of the personnel pool of these missions or operations is coloured by their own professional and educational background, as well as previous experiences in both working and personal life. Difference inevitably creates clashes or tensions in terms of communication, expectations, values and the practices these values are based on. The dilemmas and recommendations addressed in the articles of this volume voice these concerns. They were varied and oftentimes particular to specific mission-based situations which does not, though, prevent us from drawing some general conclusions. I will here only go into a selected number of issues that cropped up in several articles, and thus seem to indicate a general direction of commonality.

One aspect that posed a challenge to crisis management work in general is the issue of time, and particularly *differing concepts of and priorities in terms of the use and allocation of time*. Different actors prioritise the usage of time in different manners. Civilian organisations working on the ground with the reality of service delivery under difficult conditions prefer

[5] Or then they have simply spoken of organisational culture in relation to crisis management.
[6] Ministry of Defence, UK 2009, 2.
[7] Coffman 2004
[8] Harris 2005, 15.

to have a long-term perspective on time. Ministries and military actors have a shorter-term concept of time. For the military work cycles are shorter than those of civilian actors and, in addition, there is pressure to stabilise the situation as rapidly as possible in order to diminish factors that may negatively impact on security. Time afforded for activities by project-planning staff, often located at a distance from the field, clashes with the reality of getting things done on the field level. In general, it can be said that representatives of the international community are obsessed with time, often having a fairly inflexible attitude in terms of the necessity to adhere to timelines and project cycles. As a result of this they may lack an understanding of how culturally relative the concept of time is.

The next area of concern to several of the contributors was problems relating to the *use of language and the negative impacts of unclear communication*. There are obvious power dimensions involved in the use of language. Having stereotypical perceptions of other actors will pose barriers to straightforward communication. The terms we use, the manner in which we present information and to whom we present vital information is guided by inherent interests and issues of control. The use of exclusive language, such as jargon particular to specific sectors or professional groups, effectively shuts out those individuals who do not have mastery of this language. Distance that exists between actors due to a lack of trust or simply geographical distance may be a result of and is exasperated by a lack of clear communication. Ruptures in the flow of information and in the style and modalities of communication between central and field offices, province and capital areas impact on the efficacy of missions. This may also be visible in a growing gap in relation to policy making with actors speaking past each other, as illustrated in the case of Islamic nations developing their own policies and declarations on human rights. It is most probable that this separatist tendency on a political level creates further distance between actors and potential conflict. The level of international politics and agendas also guide what issues receive attention, in other words, what one communicates.

On the *operational or practical level* a number of issues were listed by the authors. One major point presented was how *discrepancies in the style and manner of working* (eg. analysis and planning of activities, approach to security) between civil and military, as well as international and local actors influence missions. What further complicates this picture is that international actors may think along the lines of national contingents which may jeopardise a process of ensuring local ownership of processes typical of crisis management situations. Geographical positioning affects the way priorities are decided – on a central level in capital cities priorities follow pre-planned strategies, whereas on the local level in the provinces one is forced to adopt an ad hoc style of operating. The fact that international actors enter the local scene in a country experiencing crisis and conflict upsets power balances and thus interferes with local authority structures. In many cases, international actors lack sufficient knowledge of the background to conflicts and the specifics of conflict situations. A knowledge of the history and political economy, including the particularities of the local level, is still an underused resource in the planning and implementation of crisis management interventions. We are, in a sense, re-inventing the wheel when we fail to strive for in-depth learning of the historical past of conflict areas, both in terms of national and regional history. Also, familiarity with the history of conquest can show us that invasions are part of historical cycles and invading powers have also brought improvements to the societies they have invaded. One of the

features of conquest can be forced changes for the better, introduction of innovations and new ways of thinking, bringing new perspectives to old problems.

The recommendations presented can be summarised as a request for *flexibility in working methods and approaches, as well as realism in terms of the time it takes* to "repair" societies that have lived through extended periods of crisis and conflict. We only need to look at events in our own recent history. It took decades for Finland to recover from the Winter and Continuation wars. It required us to adopt a stance of flexibility and innovation in reconstruction work of communities and society in general.

In a number of articles there was a general call to *create a shared culture of crisis management* through such means as having a clearly understood common language; to recognise the strength in having diverse actors with diverse backgrounds and expertise working together; to strive to use shared, commonly agreed upon working methods and learning from past mistakes; and to put in mechanisms to ensure continuous learning and shared understanding of expected mission results, awareness of each other's objectives and values and clearly communicating these throughout the cooperation process. One concrete suggestion was to use a system of secondment of staff and to implement more research on actors and their perception on the tasks and cooperation patterns involved in their work.

The issue of what *type of personnel are recruited to crisis management missions* was also mentioned. The biggest challenge here is how to, in practice, identify during recruitment who has the right personal capacities to be a culturally competent crisis management professional and how to train them in acquiring these skills. Having the necessary educational and professional credentials is not enough. More importantly, experts should also possess intercultural skills. The challenge here is how to include more practice based exercises on acquiring intercultural skills. If one really wants to bring about change in attitude and behaviour, training needs to include more practical hands-on exercises in using intercultural skills. The role of cultural advisors as cultural brokers should also be looked into. Employing individuals who are experts on the general concept of culture and on collecting culturally specific information, as well as having the right attitude and approach, may be more important than finding individuals who are well versed in a particular culture. This same idea should be applied to the approach to training on cultural awareness. It is important to impart training on the general concept of culture in addition to culture-specific information on the cultural features of specific mission areas.

Identifying the "right" kind of personnel is important also because culturally incompetent professionals can potentially incur costs to, and have a detrimental effect on, the overall efficiency of the project or mission. Often the misbehaviour of one person can come to negatively influence the view that others have of people of that nationality/organisation/project/professional group. In this sense it becomes a public matter and an issue of collective responsibility. Yet another challenge, thus, is to *put in place assessment mechanisms that follow through the whole process of crisis management* from planning, to implementation and hand-over of the process to local actors, including *iterative performance evaluation of the cultural competence of crisis management personnel* while in mission[9].

[9] This idea was not one presented in one of the previous articles in this volume, but is an addition made my the author of this article.

First Steps and Useful Hints

The challenges identified in crisis management are rather overwhelming, but equally encouraging are the recommendations that are presented by the writers of this publication. It is heartening that we have already started pondering how culture plays a role and what the future direction could be in terms of providing more culturally competent crisis management. On a general level it can be said that it all starts with the individual and the attitudes, knowledge and skills that one has. When your cultural competence grows so does your confidence and the trust you have in yourself and your abilities. The quality of your communication and relationships with others will, hopefully, improve as will your job satisfaction. It is crucial that you are motivated to learn so that you make a conscious and direct effort to acquire a deeper understanding of how culture impacts on crisis management. It also means having a general appreciation and respect for the cultural differences that you meet in the course of your work. Instead of staring ourselves blind on the issue of difference we should embrace similarity.[10] By identifying the common ground we are one step closer to developing common objectives and practices and, by extension, a shared culture of crisis management.

If we begin on the level of personal learning an important first step is *learning about your own culture*. We are often not aware of the fact that we are all cultural beings and that everyone is not necessarily at the same level of consciousness regarding his or her culture. We can use the analogy of the iceberg. The tip of the iceberg is that part of culture that is visible to us, but the lion's share of it lies concealed under the water. If you do not understand what your own attitude towards culture is you run the risk of seeing all culture through the same lens. The way you view other cultures is affected by the process of comparing that which is familiar (your own culture) to that which is unfamiliar (the other culture). Here it is important to note that although humans are cultural beings their behaviour is also influenced by human nature and individual personality.[11] What complicates this is that individuals interpret the same culture in different ways which leads to there being numerous interpretations of "my culture", and equally, there are great variations in terms of what comprises "national culture". We can just think about how we would define "Western culture", a term often used by practitioners. Is there actually such a thing as "Western culture" and what is it comprised of? There is, thus, a great variety in the ways culture is understood and enacted by individuals. This complexity attests to the flexibility and dynamism of culture – it is a concept in the making which develops through practice. Awareness of other's culture and how it impacts on individuals is a good starting point. It is equally important to be aware of how your own culture impacts on the way you work.

Some other useful basic hints which may assist us in moving towards our goal of achieving more culturally confident crisis management are:

1. *Demonstrate acquired cultural competency skills* through practices such as in interviewing, communicating, recognising, eliciting and negotiating different core-cultural issues. Participate in various cultural activities such as social events, festivities, festivals and the like. [12]

[10] Harris 2005.
[11] Hoeklin 1995.
[12] Harris 2005.

2. *Make use of various roles* as a means of facilitating your entry into a new community or group, to help you build rapport.
3. *Gain cultural knowledge by* learning as much as possible about the socio-cultural perspectives of others, this will allow you to rely less on generalisations. Ask members of the other culture about the accuracy of the information you have about their culture. [13]
4. *Work with cultural brokers,* informants who can provide you with reliable information.[14]
5. Conduct *information gathering activities on the ground* to get as good a picture as you can of local conditions, expectations, aspirations, wishes, and resources.
6. *Ensure community*[15] *participation* by consulting your stakeholders when you plan, implement and assess processes and projects. Involve stakeholders in the decision-making process. [16]
7. *Communicate with the local population on a regular basis* about the mission as a means of making mutual expectations known.
8. Be conscious of the language and communication styles people use. When communicating *avoid jargon, use simple words, take your time*. Check whether your message was clearly understood.[17]
9. *Be clear about the meanings attributed to central terms* such as cooperation and partnership. How are these understood by the various stakeholders? In negotiating partnerships be weary of asserting domination and control of the process.
10. Look into *what types of preferences and incentives various actors have* when developing partnerships.[18]
11. Translate organisational cultural preferences and understanding into *actions and statements that are understandable to the local population*. Make sure that agreements and mandates take into account local cultural understandings and institutions (eg traditional structures of authority and mediation)[19].
12. Try to identify forms of intervention that work with the culture you are working with by *being as flexible as possible*.[20]
13. *Be aware of symbols* and how they are interpreted by various actors. Get information on how various individuals understand and give value to such things as flags, dress (uniform, traditional dress), colours (eg. the use of the Islamic colours), logos of organisations and agencies, etc. [21]
14. *Be aware of issues relating to the particular history of locations* where you work because this affects the meanings that local populations give to actions, objects and places.[22]

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[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] By community I here mean the crisis management community, i.e. all stakeholders and actors involved in the process of implementing crisis management initiatives.
[16] Harris 2005.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Rubinstein, Keller & Scherger 2008.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Kealey & Protheroe 1995.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Rubinstein, Keller & Scherger 2008.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges on a general level is how to harmonise the deep cultural differences that arise in interaction between cooperation partners, in other words "the ways in which people understand and feel about what they experience, and whether they believe and feel that they are being taken seriously or not."[23] This is essentially about making them feel respected and treated as equal partners within crisis management initiatives.

Women dancing in UNHCR refugee camp, Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2009. Photo: Kari Mäkinen

In Conclusion

Last, but not least, we can conclude that interventions change culture in both positive and negative ways, and at the same time interventions create a culture of their own. As has been noted in past missions, we can no longer sweep culture under the rug when dealing with crisis management or when referring to it in passing, without analysing it in depth to find out precisely how culture plays a role in all endeavours of this field of work. It is natural to make use of political advisors in crisis management teams, so why not also give cultural advisors an equally important role on these teams? What Robert Rubinstein has to say of culture and crisis management[24] aptly illustrates why this issue needs to be firmly lodged on the agenda also in the future:

[23] Ibid

[24] He talks of peacekeeping, but I use crisis management in its place.

"Because it is human social activity, and thus communicates meaning, [crisis management] is inevitably affected by cultural considerations. Indeed, culture affects what happens in [crisis management] in a myriad of ways and at all levels of its action. This is as true of the events of particular missions as it is of how the institution of [crisis management] is organised and operated."[25]

Crisis management is made up of people with specific experiences, aspirations, expectations and the resources to make a difference in the lives of individuals that live in dire conditions, often on the verge of survival. The ultimate hope that one can make a difference is what, hopefully, drives individuals to seek employment in crisis areas. If we put our resources to use in a culturally competent manner the impact of our actions will be all the greater. Changing one's attitudes towards other cultures can be challenging, but it is all part of a process of personal and professional learning that can be truly rewarding.

The future role of FINCENT should be to become a firm part of this learning journey by providing training on cultural awareness in a cross-cutting manner so as to make cultural awareness part and parcel of every level and type of training. The "add-on" approach that is commonly used in training on cultural issues is problematic because it separates culture into one component among all the information that is disseminated to learners during a training course. Comprehensive crisis management should, thus, in the future imply that the issue of culture and cultural awareness is all-inclusively integrated into training courses. Taking up cultural awareness as a theme of this publication is a good starting point on this path towards educating culturally competent professionals by using a comprehensive approach to culture in crisis management. Good luck to all on this mission!

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Abstracts

Cultural Dimensions in Crises in General and in Crisis Management in Particular

Tuomo Melasuo

Addressing cultures today in the context of political, economic and social evolution is generally a very complex issue, in crisis management it is even more difficult. In our times culture has replaced other factors in explaining main features in a given society and so it has become a political phenomena. Often in this context culture is not at all defined, but remains a very loosely used statement. Including cultural dimensions in crisis management is a very positive contribution and can be an important way forward for long-term and sustainable evolution of societies in crisis. The cultural dimension in crisis management is, first of all, a practical question. It is something which should be included in planning of all crisis management missions, and in training of their personnel, both civilian and military alike. In the people-centred approaches the goal of this might be to help the local communities reach their own cultural aspirations. Understanding cultural dimensions in crisis management means respecting other people's cultures, their dignity and their feelings of justice.

Cultural Competence – smooth behaviour or deep understanding?

Kalle Liesinen

This article manifests the stature of cultural competence, reflecting a single individual's standpoint to megatrends in crisis management. The author identifies the awareness of one's own cultural position as a profound basis of deeper understanding. Efficiency based motivation to improve cultural competence and artificially learned decorum may produce smooth operators, but prevent a deep cultural awareness. Potential risk of failure will arise when desktop targets are executed without a readjustment to the social and cultural reality. Allegations of international arrogance will ensue if the target community can't influence the process. The author concludes that the hardening of western tones may stretch the limits of cultural collision, pointing out that any development needs time, counterpoised with adequate resources.

Cultural Awareness in Historical Perspective

Helena Partanen

Cultural awareness is increasingly important, not only due to the complexity and comprehensiveness of international operations, but also to the clear understanding that there can never be a military solution in any conflict where international tools are used. Military, civilian, humanitarian and development tools are closely intertwined and linked to each other. Understanding the strategic environment, agreement on shared strategic objectives, appropriate troop levels, integration of all international instruments, and effective interagency and multinational coordination from the very beginning are crucial. We could all do more to develop a common strategy for action and goals, agreeing on a realistic level of action, and find better means of sharing lessons learned. More importantly, we should find concrete means of enhancing these common goals.

Security and Culture in Eastern African Crisis Areas

Simo-Pekka Parviainen

This article provides a brief overview of the crisis situations in the Horn of Africa and shows how country specific situations are firmly part of regional problematics. One central dilemma that aggravates the already fragile security situation, and the possibility for democracy to be functional, is the existence of substantial income gaps and abject poverty. Although the situations in the individual countries of the Horn of Africa differ, they are all interconnected and have negative implications for the whole sub-region. The article proclaims that the wounds of war will take long to heal and the process of bringing about lasting peace and reconciliation will be extended. To reverse this dynamic it is essential that situations are handled with patience and strategic consideration, and that a reform of the UN Security Council is initiated.

When Cultures Meet – stories from daily life

Helinä Kokkarinen

The author discusses how she, through her own personal experiences of working with people from various cultural backgrounds, has come to understand how important cultural awareness and sensitivity are in crisis management. Through a number of brief stories she highlights some useful hints on how to use the awareness of cultural difference and similarity as a resource that can facilitate intercultural communication. One of the main lessons learned from working in crisis management in Kosovo was that only by acting as a living example of the guiding principles and values of Finland's National Strategy for Civilian Crisis Management is it possible to earn the trust of the local population. And only by gaining this trust is it possible to successfully carry out the tasks of civilian crisis management missions. Intercultural communication can be improved if cooperation partners realise that we are all central working tools through which effective communication can be achieved.

Cultures of Integration – from Afghanistan towards a Nordic stabilisation task force?

Oskari Eronen

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan integrate military and civilian expertise, thus providing a captivating, multifaceted experiment in the organisational cultures of crisis management. The standard labelling of the PRTs as civil-military units may conceal some of the more interesting dynamics within the organisation. Beyond the bipolarity, various professional cultures including the military, development experts, political officers, police etc. cooperate and collide in an intense environment. They are played , for example, in deliberations over communication, security, analysis and planning, time, and reforms. This lively experience from the PRTs ought to be taken seriously, when considering the establishment of a Nordic stabilisation task force, which was proposed recently by Thorvald Stoltenberg.

The Challenge of Culture and Cultural Differences as Experienced in Afghanistan

Rolf Helenius

Nations and organisations involved in crises management presently try to find solutions as to how to address their tasks by focusing on the endemic culture of the environment in which they act. In many areas this may be the way forward, but in some of the more complicated theatres this has become a new challenge in its own right. This article tries to show the challenge of using culture in Afghanistan, where culture is defined as sets of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterise separate groups of people or different organisations. The author argues that the challenges of doing crisis management in Afghanistan are not only due to the diversity of cultures found in the country, but are also a result of how the last thirty years of conflict has affected culture in the country and the diasporas living abroad during this time period. The article further addresses the challenges presented by the different organisational cultures that the main stakeholders trying to reconstruct Afghanistan adhere to and how they interfere with a cohesive effort.

Striving for Balanced Approaches in Crisis Management: Reflections on organisational cultures

Olli Ruohomäki

One of the main aims of international engagement in crisis situations is to stabilise the situation to such an extent that recovery can commence. International actors can affect the outcome in positive and negative ways, but international engagement will not, by itself, put an end to crisis situations. While assisting national stakeholders in solving their security, political and development challenges, the least that the various international actors must do is to make sure that there is a shared objective, a shared understanding of how to get

to the objective, clear responsibilities, division of labour and an appreciation of the added value and limitations of the respective actors. Understanding the organisational culture of the different actors is a step forward in maximising the positive impact of engagement and minimising unintentional harm. Despite different approaches and understandings of the situation, all actors need to appreciate the fact that every actor's contribution counts and is dependent upon those of the others. It is also vital that the actors involved acknowledge and recognise organisational cultural differences, including constraints of capacity, and take them into account when developing cooperation strategies.

Recognition of the Importance of Culture and Intercultural Skills – How do we move from rhetoric to practice?

Annika Launiala

The importance of culture and its influence on effective and successful working in a mission area has been recognised in the field of civilian crisis management in the 21st century. This has meant that the civilian crisis management experts that are to be recruited need to have adequate intercultural skills that allow them to adjust to the cultural context of the missions, as well as to work in a respectful and collaborative manner with their local and international counterparts. Thus, the challenge for organisations is to provide appropriate training on intercultural skills that goes beyond knowledge to an actual application of the skills in every day work. To achieve this, there must be changes to the current approach to training cultural awareness. This article provides four suggestions on how to move from rhetoric to practice, namely from knowledge of cultural awareness to applying intercultural skills.

Cultural Awareness in Finnish Cadets Education

Petri Toivonen

In the future Finland will, presumably, increase its activity in the crisis management theatre. This has an effect on the demands for our officers' education and training as well. Operations may take place even further away, be more complex, and require our officers' increased capability to adapt successfully to various cultural settings. The basic idea is that we need to enhance our officers' competence to anticipate the actions of, interact with, and influence individuals and groups whose cultural context differs from our own. The building of this intercultural competence is a long-term process, which has its basis in our military officers' basic training. Unfortunately, at the moment we are still in the initiation phase.

Culturally Confident Crisis Management – Some hints from an anthropologist

Susanne Ådahl

One major challenge in the future of crisis management work is how to factor in cultural competence on the practical level. Initiating a discussion on the importance of having a culturally aware approach to the mission level is a good starting point. But what are the dilemmas encountered by Finnish crisis management practitioners and what recommendations do they provide to increase efficacy in this field? This summarising article of the volume briefly touches upon the concept of culture in crisis management and the terms 'cultural awareness', 'cultural sensitivity' and 'cultural competence' or 'capability'. In addition it lists some useful selected steps to take, both in terms of the personal and the operational level, to enable personnel to more effectively support the stakeholders of crisis management initiatives.

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Finnish Defence Forces International Centre

Focus on Culture in Crisis Management

The environments in which integrated crisis management operations function today are complex and ever changing. The nature of conflicts is multi-facetted and unclear, engaging a multitude of actors. At the centre of these conflicts are people, their agendas, concerns and aspirations.The need for understanding the cultures of both the local population and the other stakeholders has increased to the point where it may be vital to the success of crisis management initiatives. Placing culture squarely on the agenda implies cultural analysis of and capacity building on all levels of crisis management.

Prominent professionals in the field of crisis management have in this collection of articles brought forth a range of challenges identified, but also recommendations as to how the situation can be improved. The publication aims to bring forward the Finnish view on and Finnish experiences of how culture impacts on crisis management responses. Through the experiences of Finnish crisis management professionals the publication hopes to contribute to further developing the process of integrating cultural awareness into crisis management by opening up a dialogue on this vital subject.

This publication is the second volume of the Publication Series of the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre (FINCENT) and focuses on the need to integrate cultural awareness and the development of cultural competence within Finnish crisis management.

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