

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**DEVELOPING SOLDIER CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

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## ABSTRACT

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The U.S. military's technology and equipment provides an overwhelming array of resources to help American Service members conduct a wide assortment of missions. However, superior technology and equipment alone does not ensure successful missions. Rather, it is the American Service member's human dimension and understanding of others which provides the foundation for mission success. A key aspect of the Service member's human dimension is the understanding of people in terms of customs and culture. Preparing a Service member to deal effectively with others who are from a different culture is a critical task for the Department of Defense. The challenge is to develop culturally competent Service members who are capable of winning the hearts and minds of others in future operations. This paper examines cultural competency and its role in U.S. military operations. A discussion of five key dimensions of cultural variability is addressed and how the variables can influence cross-culture communication. Also, methodologies for training cultural competency are explored. Finally, recommendations for implementation strategies are discussed.



## DEVELOPING SOLDIER CULTURAL COMPETENCY

### A Potential Future

The year is 2015 -- an expeditionary Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) is stationed at one of the U.S. Army's remaining 10 joint-posts. Fort J. Helms (recently renamed from Fort Bragg-Pope due to base realignment and closure actions) was notified to deploy within 48 hours to Krasnovia, a small country located on the continent of Africa, to stave off a potential humanitarian crisis brought on by seven years of famine. Krasnovia is located at the nexus of an historical trade route crossroads where an amalgam of customs, values, and languages resulted in a collision of cultures not seen elsewhere in the world. The good news is the SBCT, composed of deployment savvy Soldiers with a mix of recruits straight out of basic training, returned eight months ago from a year long peacekeeping operation to the recently re-unified country of Korea United. Operationally and tactically, the deployment to Krasnovia will not be a stretch for the unit. The commander worries more how to best win the Krasnovian "hearts and minds" and to prevent the situation from worsening. The operation will rely heavily on small patrols establishing personal relationships with the local populace -- understanding the culture is a key to success. The commander recalls that the unit's cultural training prior to deploying to Korea United proved to have been extremely beneficial in helping to avoid the "strategic Corporal syndrome." The challenge of operating in a very diverse and vibrant Krasnovian culture, which is significantly different than Korea United, will be challenging.

However, subordinate commanders and leaders supervise well-rehearsed deployment battle drills, which include Soldiers updating hand-held PDA universal language translators, and brushing up on knowledge of Krasnovian culture and customs. No leader or Soldier wanted to repeat the mistake a young officer made in Korea United, using the wrong dialect and hand gesture, when talking to the provincial governor's daughter.

### A World of Culture

The above future scenario is not an unfamiliar one to any of today's Soldiers who have been assigned or deployed overseas. The U.S. Army did not always have the necessary tools, or provide the guidance, to help Soldiers become culturally aware. Meeting and working with others from different countries, is a Soldier's stock and trade, when conducting missions. Since its inception, the U.S. Army has been involved with other countries and their peoples, on a sliding scale of brute force to holding out a helping hand. While U.S. technology, resources, and equipment helped to deal with the problems, it is the American Soldier who adds the human dimension that makes it all work. A key component of the Soldier's human dimension is the

understanding of the people they will meet in the contemporary operating environment. An underlying principle is that the more competent a Soldier is in understanding self and foe in terms of customs, language and culture, the better the Soldier is able to accomplish the mission. Preparing a Soldier to deal effectively with others who are from a different culture is both a leader and U.S. Army responsibility. With the world looking through the “one-eye” media window, Soldiers must be trained competently to work confidently in other cultures. With the speed of information flow around the world, a Soldier’s cultural misstep can quickly turn a local, simple cultural misunderstanding into a situation with strategic implications -- “the strategic Corporal syndrome.” The challenge for the U.S. Army of today is to develop culturally competent Soldiers who will be successful at winning the “hearts and minds” of people in future operations in a world of culture.

#### Cultural Competency as an Imperative

The importance of developing a Soldier’s cultural competency is not a recent phenomenon. The need for cultural competency has developed as the United States has moved away from its isolationism tendencies over the past 120 years and engaged in other country’s affairs around the world. The character and duration of the conflicts the United States has been engaged in over the years, coupled with evolving American attitudes and views on diversity towards other peoples have all helped to influence the U.S. Army to identify a need to train Soldiers to be more culturally aware.

How countries operationalize cultural and social constructs, such as individualism, human rights, equality, rule of law, have been developed over generations in response to a variety of environmental and societal conditions. The fundamental differences in these constructs, which in many circumstances are deeply ingrained, can cause a clash of cultures.<sup>1</sup> The idea that a world culture will evolve ignores the fundamental differences in cultures and the underlying psychology that helped develop them. Whatever the nature of future conflict, the United States’ desired end-state for a lasting peace is influenced, in part, by the cultural sensitivity the Soldiers display during future deployments. Typically, individual level cultural missteps are often swept over by larger political interests and the general good behavior of the deployed force as a whole. However, institutionalized insensitivity, or behaving culturally irresponsibly, often serves to sow the seeds for future conflict or provides additional challenges in bringing about a lasting peace. Culturally aware Soldiers become a force multiplier for the commander rather than an embarrassment which may result in costly mistakes.

### Current Cultural Training Methodology

The current means for developing a Soldier's cultural awareness is decentralized to local commanders. When assigned to a command overseas, Soldiers typically receive briefings, handouts, and books during in-processing. These provide a "Cliff-notes" like guide to understanding the country's customs and culture. Often times, some rudimentary language training is provided, but is generally limited to very basic phrases. Any other cultural awareness training is left to a Soldier's initiative, fellow Soldiers, and the chain of command. Unit leaders also face challenges in finding appropriate cultural training material when preparing Soldiers for deployments overseas. Leaders may rely on products from higher headquarters, intelligence sections, National Geographic, or the Internet to help train the Soldiers. The effectiveness of current cultural training across the U.S. Army is mixed at best, providing Soldiers a "tourist" level of understanding which does not adequately prepare them to be culturally competent and effective. The one exception is for those in the Special Forces, Foreign Area, and attaché specialties who receive intensive and specialized cultural training.<sup>2</sup>

The stationing of large concentrations of troops in places such as Germany, Korea, and the Middle East has provided Soldiers, serving in these regions, the opportunity to develop advanced to intermediate levels of cultural understanding. The U.S. Army is transforming from a forward-based force to an expeditionary one which deploys from the United States to regions around the world. As a result, with fewer units stationed overseas, a Soldier's opportunity to become culturally savvy is greatly reduced. The U.S. Army's current disparate collection of cultural training activities, coupled with fewer opportunities to live overseas in the future, will continue to produce culturally challenged Soldiers. Inherent in future missions with deployments to the Krasnovia's and the Korea United's of the world, the U.S. Army must institutionalize cultural competency to help ensure success.

### Challenges

"To win good will in an unfamiliar society...requires not only a good understanding of another way of life, but a way with people."<sup>3</sup> Researchers have shown that human relations training is an important component of helping people to prepare for working abroad.<sup>4</sup> The training provides a foundation for understanding different cultures and developing methods for negotiating through the maze of differences between different peoples. An important aspect of the training to understand is an individual's cultural perspective will influence the interaction with someone from a different culture. The perspectives of individuals from industrialized countries and those from underdeveloped countries will likely be different, in part, because the solutions

each group creates for a set of similar problems are influenced by what each society has available.<sup>5</sup> An example of this is a western based non-governmental organization (NGO) providing specialized farming equipment, with the intent of creating efficiencies, to a culture that values traditional methods of farming and eschews modern conveniences. Researchers have found that a key to a successful interaction between different cultures is understanding the culture's ability to accept change.<sup>6</sup> The researchers concluded that a society's capacity to accept change is influenced by the recipient's relative state of development.<sup>7</sup> The giver in this case, the NGO, should not assume that the recipient of the farm equipment is unskilled or unwilling to accept change, but simply does not share the same solution to a common problem influenced, in part, by cultural differences between the groups.

#### Developing Cultural Competency

A culturally competent Soldier means many things. Soldiers must understand internal primary culture and sub-culture influences, being accepting of other diverse cultures and cultural adaptable. Soldiers who understand their internalized culture influences will be able to recognize core values, beliefs, and customs that characterize their particular group. It helps a Soldier to put on "cultural spectacles" by knowing oneself, and understanding how core values influence how one looks at other cultures.<sup>8</sup> Living in a culturally diverse world is a constant. Individuals, organizations, and countries who embrace cultural diversity will receive incalculable benefits. It allows one to anticipate and to predict with a high degree of accuracy the success of a plan; it might improve the quality of U.S. interaction with another country.<sup>9</sup> Cultural adaptability "is the willingness and ability to recognize, understand, and work effectively across cultures."<sup>10</sup> These are essential components in developing cultural competency. The unifying component that pulls it all together is the Soldier's value of respect -- treating others as they should be treated. Otherwise, Soldiers without a strong sense of respect are only going through the motions of being culturally tolerant. When stressed, the essential components may not effectively influence a Soldier's behavior and likely result in unintended consequences. Language proficiency is excluded as an essential component for three reasons. First, not all Soldiers have the aptitude to learn another language. Second, the amount of time required to develop and maintain language proficiency is not practical. Finally, the availability of translators is marginally adequate, for the moment, to conduct successful missions. Technology is available, including using handheld devices (PDAs), which provide near universal language translations. Written and oral language translators are available today, but still require several

generations of maturation to become completely effective and error free. Future advances will continue to improve these devices, enabling all Soldiers to converse error free.

#### The Importance of Developing Cultural Self-Awareness

Soldiers who are culturally self-aware possess an important component in developing cultural competency because it serves to heighten one's cultural influences in thinking.<sup>11</sup> Being culturally self-aware dampens one's own internal assumptions, which may result in misunderstandings with others from another culture. These internal assumptions can influence a Soldier's interactions with others. Being aware of these assumptions allows Soldiers to better "communicate" with people who have grown up in a cultural environment that is very different from the United States.<sup>12</sup> It allows one to suspend judgment when encountering a cultural behavior that is different or unusual. An example is some cultures accept same genders holding hands as a mere sign of friendship, where others may view it as a sign of intimacy.

However, it is difficult for Soldiers to develop cultural self-awareness because it is ingrained in one's personality. It is difficult to identify the Soldier's cultural influences because of the daily reinforcement with others who are culturally similar. Unless one is placed in a situation that makes the influences readily apparent, such as the reaction of others, it is less likely they will be aware of them.<sup>13</sup> If there is no reason for identification, a Soldier's cultural influences will continue to operate in the "background," silently influencing one's behavior and how others are viewed. Often times, cultural influences are described in "anthropological terms," which are too abstract and generalized to a society and does little to help a Soldier surface one's internal biases.<sup>14</sup> Developing cultural self-awareness in Soldiers who are ethnocentric or unsympathetic towards other cultures is at best challenging. An ethnocentrist's inability to appreciate and understand internal cultural influences will likely inhibit abilities to develop any level of cultural competency and appreciation for other peoples.<sup>15</sup>

#### Communications Across Cultures

Soldiers, like most people, will tend to focus on the cultural similarities between groups and assume any differences to be only minor when interacting with other cultures. This is particularly true when dealing with people from similar countries such as Great Britain and the United States.<sup>16</sup> There are universal issues that all cultural groups must deal with to include providing food, clothing, shelter, raising children, dealing with illness and death. All cultures react strongly to violent acts such as murder and rape. Most groups stereotype roles within a society using gender and age. While these and other issues are universally common, how each culture deals with them is where the differences between the cultures are exposed.<sup>17</sup> Soldiers

must be aware of these differences to better understand how communication across cultures is influenced.

There are many variables which can account for the differences and similarities between cultures. Researchers often refer to them as “dimensions of cultural variability”.<sup>18</sup> Soldiers must be aware of these five key variables and how they can influence cross-culture communication. The variables are: 1) individualism-collectivism; 2) low- and high-context communication; 3) power distance; 4) uncertainty avoidance; 5) masculinity-femininity. Soldiers who understand these variables and how each one influences a culture’s thinking will help improve the quality of interaction with different groups.

Soldiers, who do not appreciate the differences between cultures that are individualistic or collectivists in outlook, run the risk of creating conflict or hitting barriers. The key to minimizing conflict is to strike the right balance struck between the rights of the individual and the welfare of the group. Individualist cultures emphasize self-reliance, initiative, merit, and competition as the basis for behavior. One’s identity is wrapped up in taking care of themselves and those who are a part of their in-group.<sup>19</sup> Collectivist cultures downplay the identity of any one individual and focus on the contributions to the group’s well-being. The group’s shared beliefs, norms, goals and value of cooperation override the individual’s views.<sup>20</sup> Individualist groups value applying the same standard to all people, whereas collectivist groups have different individual standards based on their group membership. No culture is exclusively individualist, or collectivist, but rather a blend of the two, with one dominating.<sup>21</sup> Within each culture, there are sub-groups (e.g., families, schools, society) which can influence the individual. The difference between these groups, in individualist and collectivist cultures, is the influence each has on the individual, and under what circumstances. Individuals, within each group, may define themselves contrary to their culture’s tendencies under different circumstances.<sup>22</sup> Soldiers may assume, when working with collectivists cultures, that individuals will “emphasize their social identities over their personal identities” when all do not necessarily do so.<sup>23</sup> The point that Soldiers must remember is to not assume that an individual’s tendencies are driven by the culture’s individualist or collectivist views.

Another key variable for Soldiers to understand is how different cultures use low- and high-context communications. Low-context communication means being very direct and explicit in a message’s content when communicating with others. High-context communication uses physical context or unspoken cues to communicate a message. These are often referred to as direct and indirect communication. Individualist cultures tend to use low-context, direct communications, whereas collectivist cultures use high-context, indirect communications. High-

context groups view the low context groups as abrupt and rude in their messages, while low context view high context as being secretive and talking around an issue in their communications.<sup>24</sup>

Power distance refers to the characteristics of an individual, or position, in a particular society and how a culture treats them. Soldiers must recognize how cultures use characteristics such as age, gender, knowledge, expertise, and position to prescribe how to treat members of the group. For example, high-power distance cultures typically grant deference and significant referent power to those of advanced age, males, and those who hold significant positions of power. Those in low-power distance cultures are typically considered egalitarian in their dealing with others, ignoring their age, gender or position, and rely on perceived expertise and knowledge as the basis for providing referent power. Power distance also influences the formality of social gatherings, the discussion of ideas, and how innovation or criticism is handled.<sup>25</sup> Soldiers who understand how a culture deals with power distance are better able to treat a group's members with the appropriate respect as dictated by the culture.

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as a culture's tolerance for ambiguity in dealing with others. Collectivist cultures are associated with a low tolerance for uncertainty through emphasis on position and group membership. Individualist cultures generally accept a greater degree of ambiguity, valuing the individual's privacy. A culture's tolerance for uncertainty has an impact on inter-culture relationships. Outsiders, who interact with cultures which are particularly high in power distance and low in tolerance for uncertainty, may find it challenging to be accepted into the cultures' insider's group. The point is Soldiers must recognize a culture's tolerance for uncertainty and adapt behavior to conform to the other.<sup>26</sup>

The Soldier value of respect implies equality for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, race etc. However, not all cultures view equality the same, particularly in the distinction of cultural roles between men and women. Masculinity-femininity focuses on how cultures treat gender differences and expectations of each. A culture's views surrounding gender roles is often an emotional flash point, which often flares up between people with different attitudes.<sup>27</sup> There may even exist, within a culture, a difference of expectations of gender roles. The key is for Soldiers to understand a culture's sensitivities toward gender roles and make adjustments to minimize misunderstandings.

#### Cross-cultural Training Strategies

Cross-cultural training will help Soldiers reduce anxiety and stress when deployed to a new environment. Some describe the process similar to that of a lobster shedding its protective

shell as it grows. What emerges is a larger lobster with a new shell that is still the same inside. The same can be said for Soldiers who live overseas and adapt to new surroundings -- one sees the world differently because of the experiences but are still the same on the inside.<sup>28</sup> This process, called cultural adaptation or acculturation, helps to explain the four phases of "culture shock" an individual may experience. During the initial contact with a different culture, Soldiers may experience a "honeymoon" phase where behaviors are restrained and non-aggressive. As the Soldier continues to remain in contact with the different culture, a hostile or aggressive attitude may surface toward the "foreign culture" as the stresses of reconciling the cultural differences emerge. The stresses may become particularly acute when a Soldier is operating in a combat environment. A common response to these stressors may include withdrawal and stereotyping of the host country. Finally, if the stressors do not cause withdrawal from the "foreign culture", the Soldier will likely adjust and develop coping strategies to include learning some of the language and becoming self-sufficient.<sup>29</sup> Cross-cultural training helps to reduce the effects of culture shock by giving Soldiers a sense of control and lessening any feelings of hopelessness one may experience. Understanding the process is an important part of the training.

Cross-cultural training is not simply a briefing of general or anecdotal features of a specific culture. While many Soldiers prefer country culture specific training be reduced to a simple checklist, basic phrases, generalized demographic facts, within a visual presentation, cross-cultural training is focused on learning about one's internal cultural biases than understanding the culture of others.<sup>30</sup> The components of any cross-cultural training should include anticipating the stress of "culture shock" and potential reactions, development of coping strategies to deal with the stress and anxiety, having the confidence that successful culture adaptation will occur using the coping strategies, and understanding the process and phases of cross-cultural adaptation.<sup>31</sup>

A successful cross-cultural training program for Soldiers builds on the above components. The program's focus is more on the process of Soldier self-development rather than a fact focused understanding of any particular culture. The sequencing of the program is equally important, developing first an understanding of the concept of culture. This includes describing the variables which affect interpersonal communication, such as individualism-collectivism, low- and high-context communication, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and the concept of masculinity-femininity. This lays the foundation for examining one's own cultural biases and how they influence communication. Next, understanding the dynamics of interpersonal communication is important. It helps to make one aware of the components of the

communications process between a sender and receiver, enabling one to isolate breakdowns in understanding. This part is particularly critical, because the visual and other non-verbal cues used in interpersonal communications may be misunderstood. Finally, participating in experiential exercises helps to reinforce the training, experiencing the ambiguity, feeling uncomfortable, and the frustration associated with being in a different culture. Culture training exercises such as “Bafa-Bafa” allow participants to put in to practice their coping strategies they will use to help them adapt to another culture.<sup>32</sup>

### Current State of Affairs

U.S. Army doctrine has been focused on warfighting and leadership at all levels. Stability and support operations (SASO) had been an afterthought for military leaders until the United States' participation in operations in Bosnia and Kosovo in the late 1990s which forced a review of SASO training. Leaders had to refocus military training and develop Soldiers with the skill sets, much different than warrior focused training, that were appropriate to participating in peace operations. These skill sets included managing civil-military affairs, negotiating with local officials, and providing safe and secure environments for a populace that may have included hostile elements. Deploying units conducted theater specific training, including understanding the regional culture and geopolitical issues. Units typically conducted immersion scenario training, designed to resemble the conditions Soldiers would likely face when deployed, to reinforce the techniques for operating in a SASO environment.<sup>33</sup>

Based on the experiences in Bosnia and Kosovo, the U.S. Army revised its SASO manuals, updating FM 3-07, Stability Operations and Support Operations, dated February 2003 and FM 3-07.31, Peace Operations: Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Conducting Peace Operations, dated October 2003, to reflect current views and doctrine. FM 3-07 provides the doctrinal foundation for SASO and its distinguishing characteristics from other military operations. It mentions the importance of cross-cultural understanding and adjusting attitudes as critical to ensuring mission success.<sup>34</sup> FM 3-07.31 provides tactical level commanders a useful guide for planning, training, and conducting peace operations. Both manuals address the importance of understanding the other culture, and strategies, for ensuring successful accomplishment of the mission. However, the manuals focus solely on the other culture, emphasizing an understanding of the different cultural features, and adapting to the local customs so as to not impede operations. The problem with this approach is that the cross-cultural understanding and learning is exclusively focused on the “them;” it does not include individual centered cultural self-awareness training. Finally, the primary audiences for these

manuals are those units deploying into a theater where peace operations may be a part of the mission. Deploying units need this information, but the U.S. Army would be equally well-served to incorporate effective, cross-cultural training into its training base.

The U.S. Army has embarked on a program of developing cultural awareness in its training base, focused almost exclusively on Initial Entry Training (IET) Soldiers. Current operations training is Middle East focused, incorporating training in understanding the region's customs and unique cultural features. Some IET units, such as Fort Sill's Field Artillery Training Center, conduct immersion training to provide the Soldiers with experiences of the sights, sounds, and situations expected in warfighting, and to reinforce cultural understanding to help better prepare them for future deployments. Some trade specialties, such as intelligence analysts and linguists at Fort Huachuca, receive more in-depth regional cultural training.<sup>35</sup> Recognizing that language skills are an also important part of helping with cultural understanding, especially where translators are not readily available, the U.S. Army has made available free, on-line, language training, using a training program called, "Rosetta Stone," in a variety of languages, to help promote a world view and develop a work force where Soldiers possess a rudimentary language understanding that may help in future deployments. However, institutionalizing cultural awareness across the U.S. Army is in its infancy.

#### A Way Ahead

The goal of developing cultural competency is to help improve communications and reduce misunderstandings in cross-culture interactions. Ideally, Soldiers would learn all the differences and nuances of each culture that exist. However, it would take an inexorably amount of time to develop a level of proficiency. A more reasonable approach for Soldiers would be to adopt a framework of basic fundamentals to help guide cross-culture meetings.

When interacting with others from another culture, Soldiers must be mindful of what is said and to not assume the other understands what is meant. Developing cultural self-awareness will help to reduce one's biases in communicating and understanding others. It allows one to better "see" through unbiased culture lenses and understand the other person.<sup>36</sup> Listening to the speaker's words and observing the other's non-verbal gestures will provide context and help to reduce ambiguity.

Soldiers who are tolerant of another person's behavior are better able to reduce uncertainty with interacting with people who are different. By observing behaviors, it provides insight on how one is being treated or how to treat others. A Soldier's flexibility to adapt one's

behavior to the others helps to show empathy, an appreciation for their culture, and presents oneself in a way that minimizes misunderstandings.<sup>37</sup>

Being prepared to give, or ask for, an explanation in detail, along with using cultural neutral terms or expressions, will help Soldiers to break down communication barriers. This prevents assumptions that the other person understands the cultural context of what is said or a making the mistake of understanding in one's own cultural context.

A Soldier's patience is essential in cross-cultural communication to preclude misunderstandings from getting out of control.<sup>38</sup> Minimizing the negative impact of miscommunication and reducing the negative consequences of internal prejudices and biases will lead toward a better understanding, and effective relationship, between people of different cultures.

Creating a training program which could develop these fundamentals for the entire U.S. Army is a challenging task. However, senior U.S. Army leaders are focused on adapting the training base to support the cultural awareness requirements that deploying units need to conduct their operations. They are also looking at the long-term training requirements which will support SASO operations and incorporating cultural awareness training into the U.S. Army's professional military education system. The U.S. Army is on the right path for institutionalizing cultural awareness, but it must be developed further, to incorporate all of the key variables needed to develop culturally competent Soldiers.

A lifetime can be spent on developing a high degree of cultural competency on the magnitude of doctoral dissertations. Most Soldiers do not need much beyond a "high school" level of cultural understanding to conduct missions. Also, not all Soldiers, from Privates to Generals, need the same level of cultural competency. Soldiers need an institutionalized culture education program, which is critical in developing and maintaining cultural competency, to support expeditionary deployments in the future. The U.S. Army's current disparate, event specific, cultural training, does not adequately foster a norm which promotes cultural competency in its Soldiers.

The U.S. Army's current professional military education (PME) system, from basic training through senior Service college, including commissioning sources, provides the perfect framework to develop cultural competency across the force.<sup>39</sup> The instruction should be tailored to the different levels of PME schooling, beginning with initial military training (IMT), which includes basic training, pre-commissioning, and junior leader courses, to mid-career courses (Captains Career Course and Basic & Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Courses), to senior level courses (Command & General Staff College, U.S. Army War College, U.S. Army Sergeant

Majors Academy).<sup>40</sup> Developing rank specific competency in each of these areas would provide a foundation that deploying units can build upon with regional or country specific cultural training packages.

Specifically, IMT courses should focus on developing cultural self-awareness, a basic understanding of the concept of cultures, study world geography, and role play to reinforce coping strategies to minimize culture shock. Furthermore, IMT courses should conduct a capstone event with an experiential training scenario where the young Soldier functions in a contemporary operating environment (COE), which requires understanding of other cultures in a military context. This will help to reinforce a Soldier's cultural competency and provide the confidence that to be able to function successfully when deployed abroad.

Mid-career courses should focus on building upon the Soldier's previous deployment experiences. Training should include world geopolitical updates with an emphasis on areas that fall within present U.S. interests. Role playing should be advanced to placing the leaders in tactical, and operational scenarios, which emphasize cultural issues such as rules of engagement, searches, and how to incorporate local sensitivities into mission planning. Finally, the leaders should participate in a COE training scenario where they lead inexperienced Soldiers to help develop skills in leading others in ambiguous and uncertain environments.

Senior level training should be focused on developing advanced understanding of the world geopolitical situation, with an emphasis on how to develop policies and guidelines that take cultural issues into account. Leaders should be able to assess the cultural impact on operations at the operational and strategic levels, particularly during the stability and support phase of a military operation.

While developing the curriculum is challenging, the method used to effectively instruct cultural competency will prove to be equally difficult. Current cultural training methods include knowledge based instruction such as region specific briefings, books, videos, role-playing, and situational training.<sup>41</sup> Instructional methods must be flexible to take into account an individual's cultural capabilities and needs.<sup>42</sup> The cultural training tools available today provide a sufficient level of cultural competency to a mass audience in an institutional setting, but must continue to develop as the field of culture education develops improved, pedagogical techniques.

## Conclusion

American innocence was lost during the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. The United States' collective naiveté about the world exposed its underbelly to a group of terrorists, leaving Americans to wonder what would motivate such a group to "violate the

sanctity” of the homelands. Distant countries that few had heard of, much less knew anything about, suddenly became much closer in the daily lives of Americans. The fact that Americans were left bewildered and questioning why such attacks could occur speaks volumes about the United States’ national ignorance about the culture, beliefs, attitudes and values of other civilizations. The realization that other cultures would visit harm on American shores brings a need to understand them into sharp focus. An American’s exposure to other cultures is typically limited to classes in world history, language training, and social studies. Because of the tyranny of geography, Americans are isolated from the rest of the world. Newly arrived immigrants are quick to assimilate into the “American culture,” foregoing unique cultural identity and thus depriving others the opportunity to learn about different cultures. Except for those who work in jobs that require working abroad such as international business, Foreign Service, or the military, or live in multi-cultural urban areas such as New York City, most Americans are typically culturally ignorant and incompetent about cultures significantly different than their own. This contributes to a self-perpetuating naiveté of the world. For Americans, including Soldiers, the world shrank dramatically on that terrible day. The U.S. Army can ill-afford to not learn and train its Soldiers about the world that surrounds the United States. Developing cultural competency is an imperative undertaking that will help Soldiers to better understand the world and act confidently when experiencing other cultures.

The future will continue to see an increase in global economies with countries competing for scarce resources. The internet and improved telecommunications will ease the flow of information. The traditional conflicts between countries over territories will be eclipsed by a clash of civilizations where ideologies are in conflict with one another. “The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural.”<sup>43</sup> It is the latter that underscores the need for developing cultural competency of the United States’ Servicemen and women. These Service members will face a future where understanding others and communicating effectively across cultures is as important as destroying the enemy.

Some may criticize that infusing the U.S. Army with cultural competency is a new, and unnecessary, concept. Cultural competency is not new to the Army. It is an adjunct to a Soldier’s value of respect. The value of respect is a foundation to build upon in developing cultural competency and is a critical component in dealing with others who are different. Cultural competency is, and will be in the future, a critical imperative for Soldiers as the U.S. Army conducts more expeditionary operations. The United States’ missions will continue to include winning the “hearts and minds” of the peoples wherever Soldiers are deployed. Culturally competent Soldiers, whose value of respect provides a solid foundation, will build the

bridges of understanding, developing intercultural relationships, and achieve results, because they understand, appreciate, and can work effectively in a culturally diverse world.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72 no. 3 (Summer 1993): 40.

<sup>2</sup> These insights are based on the author's personal experiences from over 21 years of service, which includes deployments and assignments abroad. A review of the U.S. Army websites that provide pre-deployment and permanent change of station preparation information, shows little has changed in the past 21 years in cultural awareness training.

<sup>3</sup> Anita Terauds et al., *Influence in Intercultural Interaction* (Washington, D.C.: The American University, 1966), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>8</sup> Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1999), 451.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis., 2.

<sup>10</sup> Jennifer J. Deal and Don W. Prince, *Developing Cultural Adaptability* (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 2003), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred J. Kraemer, *Workshop in Intercultural Communication: Handbook for Instructors* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1974), v.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 17

<sup>14</sup> Alfred J. Kraemer, *Development of a Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Instruction in Intercultural Communication* (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, 1973), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Kraemer., 21. *Development of a Cultural Self-Awareness Approach to Instruction in Intercultural Communication*

<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Gallois and Victor J. Callan, *Communication and Culture: A Guide for Practice* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 22.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>18</sup> William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Inter-group Communication* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991), 45.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Gallois, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Gudykunst, 49.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Gallois, 29.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>28</sup> Gary R. Weaver, ed., *Culture, Communication and Conflict: Readings in Intercultural Relations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2000), 182.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>33</sup> Howard Olsen and John Davis, "Training U.S. Army Officers for Peace Operations: Lessons from Bosnia," 29 October 1999; available from <http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr991029.html>; Internet; accessed 16 January 2006.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Army Department of the Army, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, February 2003), 1-18.

<sup>35</sup> The author served in the Field Artillery Training Center when changes to the training program occurred. Specifically, the changes included Middle East specific cultural awareness training and immersion training in a contemporary operating environment resembling an Iraqi village.

<sup>36</sup> Gallois, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Gudykunst, 125.

<sup>38</sup> Gallois, 65.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, *Readings in Strategic Leadership Course*, (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2005), 138.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>41</sup> P. Christopher Earley and Randall S. Peterson, "The Elusive Cultural Chameleon: Cultural Intelligence as a New Approach to Intercultural Training for the Global Manager," *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2004), 102.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Huntington, 1.