Framework for Strategic Cultural Analysis

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Notes

Sincere thanks to the following for their time and most valuable insights.

- Colonel Jiyul Kim, USA, Director of Asian Studies, US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Colonel Kim is also a doctoral candidate at Harvard. jiyul.kim@us.army.mil
- Ms Lisa Verdon, founder and director of the Joint Middle East American Trade Center. Ms Verdon was part of a four member Human Terrain Team that operated in Baghdad. lisaverdon@jmatc.org
- Dr. Hugh Gusterson, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. His paper The Cultural Turn in the War on Terror is excellent. hgusters@gmu.edu
- Dr. Marc Tyrell, instructor and researcher at The Institute of Disciplinary Studies, Carleton University, Canada. marctyrreell@gmail.com
- Mr Scott Whitney, Major, USMC (Ret.), Vice President, Kwikpoint. SWhitney@kwikpoint.com

Further Reading

Phillip Bobbit's Terror and Consent: The Wars for the Twenty-First Century, (Knopf, April 2008) is a must read. The idea for non-disruptive/disruptive subsystems was inspired by Terror and Consent. The state, and/or market state creates its own venom: anti-system groups in any guise.

For more on metacognition see Metacognition of Problem-Solving Strategies in Brazil, India, and the United States, C. Dominik Güss and Brian Wiley, Journal of Cognition and Culture, Volume 7, Numbers 1-2, 2007

For more on situational awareness see Theoretical Underpinnings of Situation Awareness: A Critical Review, Mica Endsley. In Situation Awareness Analysis and Measurement. M. Endsley and Garland Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey. The individual to global identity/culture cycle was inspired by Boyd and Endsley.


Dedicated to LTG Lawrence F. Skibbie, USA (Ret.) and Rear Admiral “Bad” Fred Lewis, USN (Ret.)
Executive Summary: FSCA Cornerstones

- Change the thinking process. Must view the world as an Integrated Evolutionary Information System. Culture is humanity in all its forms. Planetary forces are in control of both. Turn strategic cultural analysis on self and society. Must know one’s own group culture first. Employ qualitative thinking.

- Essential to employ Darwin’s theory of evolution with upgrades: evolutionary psychology, co-evolution (genes/systems), evolutionary cognitive neuroscience, phylogenetic systematics. Avoid dualities: culture versus nature.

- Explore, examine, diagnose culture by focusing on the crucial properties of culture. Analyze from a qualitative systems perspective.

- Incorporate a multidimensional political and strategic Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP) atop an evolutionary foundation.

- Recognize Culture is cyclic, multidirectional. Culture development cycle begins with questions in the quest to resolve uncertainty and reach stability. Culture is contained in porous containers categorized as tribes, states, etc. Culture cycle repeats as internal/external symbiotic interactions cause instability. Internal and External Non-disruptive and Disruptive subsystems are a creation of culture.
Apply Boyd’s OODA Loop correctly: as a sophisticated epistemological model/philosophy always in flux. Accept strategy as qualitative art.

Enhance cultural situational awareness/metacognition models to account for cultural impact on cognition and identity development.

View culture as a property of a human information organism, not a thing. Observer changes state of property.

Recognize that cultural analysis has been used to exploit and manage other cultures and justify/further the interests of the conqueror or invader. It is being used for many ends: understanding, dominance, enhancing kill chain, peace/trust.

Understand the importance of strategic cultural communications. The language of national leadership can be dangerous and damaging. Should there be an HTT group for policymakers? Defense Science Board recommends creation of a new Strategic Communications bureaucracy within US government.

Do not forget that FSCA is human-centric. People are the center of gravity (USMC). Must generate useful/practical tools for the policymaker and war-fighter. For example, *Iraq Culture Smart Card with IED Reference*—Kwikpoint.
Notable Strategic Cultural Analysts,
Human Terrain Team Members

- **Tacitus: Germania, 98**
  They are likewise wont to scoop caves deep in the ground, and over them to lay great heaps of dung. Thither they retire for shelter in the winter, and thither convey their grain: for by such close places they mollify the rigorous and excessive cold. Besides when at any time their enemy invades them, he can only ravage the open country, but either knows not such recesses as are invisible and subterraneous; or must suffer them to escape him, on this very account that he is uncertain where to find them.

- **Hume: Essays Moral, Political and Literary, 1742-1752**
  Where a number of men are united into one political body, the occasions of their Intercourse must be so frequent for defense, commerce and government that together with the same speech or language they must acquire a resemblance in their manners and have a common national character as well as a personal one peculiar to each individual.

- **Montesquieu: Spirit of the Laws, 1752**
  It is a variety of wants in different climates that fist occasioned a difference in the manner of living, and this gave rise to a variety of laws. Where people are very communicative there must be particular laws, and others where there is but little communication.

- **Jefferson: Notes on the State of Virginia, 1781-1782**
  The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do.
Clearing the Decks in the Brain

- The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.
  *Alvin Toffler quoted in The Industrial College of the Armed Forces (US-NDU) Spring 2007 Education Industry Final Report*

- Most of our problems involving security—whether in the narrow or broad sense—have global implications and require transnational institutions for their solution. We need a crude look at the whole treating global security and global politics as part of a very general set of questions about the future.

- The idea of soft power and hard power is old thinking which is why I don’t use it. That’s serial, linear thinking. You have to understand this as a whole. The idea that you can have these things in separate packets is utterly our problem. It is the way we think about war and conflict and how the institutions work together that has to change.
  *General Sir Rupert Smith* (Carnegie Council, January 2007)

### 21st Century Worldview
**Humanity as Integrated Evolutionary Information System**

Our developmental programs as well as the physiological and psychological mechanisms that they reliably construct are the natural product of evolutionary history. Human minds, human behavior, human artifacts and human culture are all biological phenomena—aspects of the phenotypes of humans and their relationships with one another. Humans, like every other natural system, are embedded in the contingencies of a larger principle of history. Explaining any particular fact about them requires the joint analysis of all principles and contingencies involved.
Strategic Cultural Analysis Demands Acceptance of a 21st Century Worldview. But Full Spectrum Resistance to this Worldview is Seen Across all Strata of USA's Culture.

Cultural Analysis being Developed at USA/TRADOC, USMC, DTRA, et al, Reflects Slightly Different Approaches to Dealing with The Other's Culture. This is a Result of Internal Culture of Service/Agency/Organization. HTT Members Must Understand Military Service Culture to be Effective.

Service/Agency Culture's View of World/Rivalry may Hamstring the Prospects for Joint/Common SCA (see below), but may be Useful on Case-by-Case Basis.

Culture Clash: Data Sharing

Incompatibility between Air Force and Army databases often hinders the flow of information in Iraq and Afghanistan, officials said. ..The inter-service spat over UAVs has gotten so ugly that both services have given up trying to resolve it on their own and now expect the dispute to be settled as part of a broad Pentagon-wide review of military roles and missions.

“All services are to blame for this, said Brig. Gen. Stephen Mundt, director of Army aviation. Each service builds its own UAVs and sensors, all from different vendors. “You end up with stovepipe information channels, which means the data have to be sorted out and disseminated, thus causing further delays.”

More Eyes in the Sky May Not Generate Better Intelligence, Sandra Erwin, National DEFENSE, June 2008.
What is Humankind? It is now possible to locate Man’s place in nature, to use Huxley’s famous phrase, and therefore to understand for the first time what humankind is and why we have the characteristics that we do. Humans are self-producing chemical systems, multicellular heterotrophic mobile organisms (animals), appearing very late in in the history of life as somewhat modified versions of earlier primate designs.

Part of a System. Our developmental programs as well as the physiological and psychological mechanisms that they reliably construct are the natural product of evolutionary history. Human minds, human behavior, human artifacts and human culture are all biological phenomena—aspects of the phenotypes of humans and their relationships with one another. Humans, like every other natural system are embedded in the contingencies of a larger principle of history. Explaining any particular fact about them requires the joint analysis of all principles and contingencies involved.

Not Dualistic. To break this seamless matrix of causation—to attempt to dismember the individual into biological versus nonbiological aspects—is to embrace and perpetuate an ancient dualism endemic to Western cultural tradition: mind/body, biological/social, physical/mental, human/animal, biological/cultural. This dualistic view expresses only a premodern version of biology, whose intellectual warrant has vanished.

Evolutionary Psychology has shown that beneath the undeniable fact of cross-cultural variation there is a bedrock of human universals: ways of thinking and feeling and behaving that can be seen in all of the cultures documented by ethnography...They number some 300, everything from aesthetics, affection, anthropomorphization, vowel contrasts, weapons, attempt to control weather, and a word for the color white.

Evolutionary Psychology has shown that many human drives can’t really be understood as ways people maximize their well being in their own lifetimes but can only be interpreted as adaptations to survival and reproduction in an ancestral environment; namely the foraging lifestyle that characterized our species through 99% of its evolutionary history.

Cognitive Science/Neuroscience has shown that all of our experiences, thoughts, feelings, yearnings and emotions consist of physiological activity in the brain.


Cognitive Causal Chains occur in the brain and the interactions between the brain and environment. To each casual link in the chain there corresponds and semantic or content relationship.

Social Cognitive Causal Chains link together mental and public things. The mental things involved are mental representations and processes. These mental representations and processes may cause behaviors that alter the environment in ways that can be perceived and thus serve as stimuli to further cognitive processes. A cultural group is held together by a constant flow of information.

System Complexity Without a Single Designer: Systems such as language, rituals and building methods—rather than traits like memes—should be studied.

Multiplicity and Variation: Thousands of distinct cultures, upwards of 8000 based on language. Variation and commonality exists within and between them. How and why?

Vertical Transmission and Phylogenetic Systematics: Cultures derive, in part, from descent by modification (according to Darwin). Through vertical transmission, cultural phenomena can become extraordinarily stable. As examples: Chinese & Tamil language for 3000 years and the hand axe for 1 million. How and why?

Horizontal Transmission and Cultural Diffusion: Cultural ideas and techniques are borrowed. Parallel inventions similar to parallel evolution in biology exist. Cultural parasites arise. How and why?

Cultural Phenomena are Cumulative: They can embody the wisdom of generations. Humans inherit the results of millennia of experimentation without any costs or dangers. This is an adaptive advantage for humans. Why?

Cultural Phenomena are Not Always Adaptive: Cultures include large portions of elements that appear functionless and sometimes harmful to biological preservation and success. Why are such features propagated?

Culture, Group Selection and the Feedback to Biology: Cultural groups can act as wholes taking collective decisions upon which the biological survival of the whole group depends. War, genocide, violent enculturation are examples. What does evolution say about leaders and followers?

Strategic Cultural Analysis: What’s the Purpose?

Classification of The Other: In the 1500’s and 1600’s attempts to justify the conquest and subjugation of indigenous peoples lead to controversies over commensurability: Were native peoples as fully human as Europeans? A variety of answers was provided as European colonists and administrators in Seville and later in London and Paris struggled to justify forced incorporation of indigenous populations into their economic and religious systems, or their eradication or relocation out of the way of colonial expansion.

Management Needs/Weaponizing Culture: To politicians and administrators, both secular and clerical, the Otherness issue generated certain management needs--to use modern parlance. It seemed prudent to learn about the cultural and political practice of the native populations, the better to deal with them diplomatically or militarily as they were educated, subjugated, converted or forced into some sort of dependency relationship with a government or church group.

Cultural Analysis: Some Heritage, Some Influences

- 1799—Thomas Jefferson, American Philosophical Society: Native Americans & Empire of Liberty
- 1823—Lewis Cass: Ethnographic and Linguistic manual on Native American Cultures and Language
- 1842—Albert Gallatin, American Ethnological Society
- 1879—John Powell, Bureau of Ethnology; Charles Norton, Archeological Institute of America; Henry Morgan, Ancient Society; Franz Boas, American Museum of Natural History


US Marine Corps, 2006. Culture Operations actively seek to alter either the behavior or determinants of behavior of indigenous people for tactical and strategic purposes. USMC BOS8610 Student Handout

Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2006, Colin Gray. The plot is the idea that the security community thinks in ways that are influenced by what it has taught itself about itself. (metacognition--js)

Defense Science Board, 2008. United States national needs require a proactive and durable means to engage and influence the attitudes and behavior of global publics on a broad range of consequential issues. DSB Task Force on Strategic Communications, January 2008

US Army, 2007. Culture is expressed as symbols and symbolic systems that have meaning. Critical to the mission to identify and decode symbols. TRADOC’s Draft Army Culture and Foreign Language (citing from Kim’s ACFSP).
The Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP)*

- The ACFSP is one approach to the vital task of viewing the world through many lenses. It focuses on cultural considerations at the political and strategic levels dealing with the impact of cultural factors in the formulation, implementation and outcome of policy and strategy.

The ACFSP identifies basic cultural dimensions that seem to be fundamental in determining political and strategic action and behavior. There are three dimensions:

- **IDENTITY**: the basis for defining identity and its linkage to interests
- **POLITICAL CULTURE**: the structure of power and decision making
- **RESILIENCE**: the capacity or ability to resist or adapt to external forces

The ACFSP identifies common themes within the three dimensions:

- Modernity and Nationalism
- Subjectivity, Emotionalism (evolutionary psychology)
- History

*Thanks to Colonel Jiyul Kim, USA, Director of Asian Studies at the US Army War College. Taken from the draft paper and presentation titled Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy 2008.*
**OODA Loop is Flexible.** Good strategic theory must be holistic paying due respect for the interdependency of the various elements and dimensions that give form to strategy. Strategic theory needs to account for the fact that it is concerned with people that react, learn and anticipate. Successful strategic theory will be imitated forcing development of new strategic theories. Boyd’s concern with the traditional overreliance and over confidence of the US military was of great concern. Instead of technology and the attritionist mindset, he focused on time, moral and mental dimensions, organizational culture and non-technological factors of change.

On Boyd, Bin Laden and 4GW as String Theory by Col. Dr. Frans Osigna, June 2007. In On New Wars (Oslo 2007)

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**Employs Situational Awareness (digesting the correct information).** The OODA-Loop is much less a model of decision making than a model of individual and organizational learning and adaption...There is a fundamental uncertainty of our knowledge [situational awareness] Concerning our environment with the subsequent need to continuously “evolve” our mental models so As to cope with our ever changing environment. Boyd’s double loop learning pays attention to information, culture, experience, worldviews, doctrine and much more. At heart, Boyd’s OODA Loop is a sophisticated epistemological model.

On Boyd, Bin Laden and 4GW as String Theory by Col. Dr. Frans Osigna, June 2007. In On New Wars (Oslo 2007)
Culture is a Property of a Co-Evolutionary Macro Adaptive Information Organism with many Interacting Sub-Systems
Beyond Maslow: The Culture Cycle--The Search for Identity, Commonality, Security

- Individual to Global Awareness Cycle
- Uncertainty to Familiarity & Stability
- Categorizing Selves, Others, Environment
- Cataclysmic Events Create Change
- Inter-group Interaction Creates Change
- Intra-group C or R can Disrupt Certainty

Climate
- Will they help us?
- Can we trust them?
- I belong to a nation.
- We are a nation.
- A God guides my/our nation.
- Our way of life is superior.
- They should be like me/us?
- Why change the system?
- Work within the system.
- Why are things changing?
- Why didn't they warn us?
- Why didn't they protect us?
- Why are they here?
- I/we will not change.
- The system does not represent me/us.

Regional
- Who are they/others?
- Are there others like us?
- Who will protect us?
- How can we be heard?
- What are the rules?
- Who is in charge?
- What do we need/want?
- Where are we?
- Am I a member?

National
- Where do I belong?
- What do I need/want?
- Where am I?
- How will I survive?
- Who/What am I?

Tribal
- Evolution
- Resources
- Geography

Community
- Beyond Maslow: The Culture Cycle--The Search for Identity, Commonality, Security
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Culture is a Human State that is Containerized and Porous Moving in Some Direction to Some End

- Territorial Tribes-Communities
- Territorial Tribal-Community Alliances
- Urban/City States
- Urban/City States Alliances
- State Nations
- State Nation Alliances
- Nation States
- Nation State Alliances
- World Government? Global State? The Gort Solution?
- Security State? Market State? Corporate Tribes?

Related Concepts:
- Climate
- Geography
- Resources
- Evolution

Non-Disruptive and Disruptive Subsystems