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Ministry  
of Defence

## Joint Doctrine Note 4/13 Culture and Human Terrain



Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre

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## **Joint Doctrine Note 4/13**

### **Culture and Human Terrain**

Joint Doctrine Note 4/13 (JDN 4/13), dated September 2013,  
is promulgated  
as directed by the Joint Forces Commander and Chiefs of Staff



Head of Doctrine, Air and Space

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## Preface

'In the consideration of context, the cultural and historical features of a situation or operating area are perhaps most important of all.'

*British Defence Doctrine*<sup>1</sup>

### Purpose

1. Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 4/13, *Culture and Human Terrain*, provides a broad understanding of the significance of culture to the military and practical guidance for cultural specialists on operations. It contributes to wider policies and training aimed at strengthening cultural capability, and should inspire cultural thinking in everything we do.

### Context

2. All conflict is about people; their behaviours, attitudes, fears, social structures, family and ideological ties and narratives. Understanding the human dimensions of conflict is therefore a critical determinant in preventing conflict, shaping it and influencing the actors involved. It contributes to our strategic awareness, our ability to plan and execute military operations, the way that we approach our risk analysis, and it helps us identify threats and opportunities. It enables us to enhance relations with our existing allies, friends and strategic partners, and to nurture emerging relationships.

3. While the importance of cultural understanding is gaining recognition, putting theory into practice is more challenging. We need to develop and exploit specialists who have lived in close proximity to the actors in specific cultures, and who have a deep understanding of the language, customs, values and narratives of that culture. This specialist knowledge will inform the Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan, which provides the framework to assess human terrain and which complements the joint preparation of the operational environment (JIPOE) effort, contributing to overall understanding.

4. Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 04, *Understanding* introduced the idea of the human domain as the totality of the human sphere of activity or knowledge. It described human actors by their individual and collective

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-01, *British Defence Doctrine* (BDD), 4<sup>th</sup> edition.



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identities, by scales of influence and by their defining characteristics and views (for example, non-state actors, organisations, friends, allies, adversaries, proxies or neutral). This publication seeks to expand on that work; expanding culture, its relevance to military operations, the cultural capabilities available for force preparation and employment, and the processes for the analysis of culture and its consideration within the operational estimate.

### Audience

5. JDN 4/13, *Culture and Human Terrain* can be used by those involved in intelligence and information activities. It can also specifically support how we frame requests for information in terms that will be understood by subject matter experts.

### Structure

6. JDN 4/13, *Culture and Human Terrain* is divided into three chapters, with a supporting lexicon. Chapter 1 is about understanding culture, while Chapter 2 looks at culture in the contemporary operating environment. Chapter 3 discusses specialist cultural capability.

### Linkages

7. This publication subsumes JDN 1/09, *The Significance of Culture to the Military*, which is now withdrawn. Although JDN 4/13, *Culture and Human Terrain* is currently a standalone publication, in time it will become a Joint Doctrine Publication. It is intended to be read alongside JDP 0-01, [British Defence Doctrine](#) (4<sup>th</sup> edition) and JDP 04, [Understanding](#). It should also be read with JDP 2-00, [Understanding and Intelligence Support to Joint Operations](#) (3rd edition). It is linked with JDP 3-40, [Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution](#), which offers guidance on how to apply culture during stabilisation and counter-insurgency operations.

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Understanding culture

## Chapter 1 – Understanding culture

‘A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.’

Mahatma Ghandi

Chapter 1 explains culture. It describes social structures, systems and organisations, as well as how people interact.

101. Culture is not something that only other people have. As diverse as it is, all humankind has culture. Equally, individuals do not generally act randomly, they behave in ways that make sense to other people in their group. These ways are accepted and understood within their group due to shared ideas about what is normal behaviour. But, people rarely recognise or understand the cultural perspective of their own attitudes, beliefs or behaviour. This is deeply embedded within their psyche and regarded as habitual.

102. If we understand our own culture, it will be easier to effectively engage with others, either in peaceful interaction or to gain the advantage in times of conflict. Cultural understanding is crucial in identifying both our vulnerabilities and opportunities, and to dispel any automatic dislike or fear of those from other countries.<sup>1</sup>

### Section 1 – Definitions

103. **Culture** is defined as: the customs, ideas and social behaviour of a particular people or group.<sup>2</sup> In essence, it is the shared concepts that guide what people believe and how they behave. It includes:

- how they are organised;
- their beliefs and values; and
- the ways in which they interact with each other and outsiders.

<sup>1</sup> This behaviour is known as xenophobia.

<sup>2</sup> *Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COED)*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011.



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The term **cultural capability** is defined as: using military cultural specialists to aid understanding.<sup>3</sup>

104. **Human geography** is defined as: the branch of geography concerned with how human activity affects or is influenced by the earth's surface.<sup>4</sup> It includes themes such as ethnicity, demographics, language, religion, education, medicine, land use and ownership and transportation. This data is used to enhance understanding and inform intelligence collection and analysis. It is also used to visualise or portray results through products such as the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment (JIPOE).

105. **Human terrain** is defined as: characterising cultural, anthropological, and ethnographic information about the human population and interactions within the joint operations area.<sup>5</sup> Human terrain analysis is the process through which understanding the human terrain is developed. It integrates human geography and cultural information.

## Section 2 – What is culture?

106. Describing culture is a complex task as it comprises many attributes. There are, however, a number of generic characteristics (or norms) that can be identified. The following are the most important.

- a. **Sharing.** Culture only works because several people share it. This does not mean that they all act or think in exactly the same way, but that they have the same general ideas about what is normal behaviour, and will think it strange if someone who is part of that group acts differently.
- b. **Learning.** We are not born with a culture. Instead, we learn our culture from the people around us and pick up specific ways of doing things unconsciously and often without formal tuition. We continue learning new cultures throughout our lives. As we join different groups (such as schools, clubs or in different jobs) we pick up the ways that those groups conduct themselves and adopt them ourselves.

<sup>3</sup> This is a new proposed definition.

<sup>4</sup> COED, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> A new proposed definition which is a revision of the original definition in Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 04, [Understanding](#).

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c. **Habits.** Generally, we do not need to think about our own culture because it has become habitual to act in a particular way. For example, we do not need to think about waiting in a queue to be served in a British shop because we accept the habit of acting in this manner. Someone unfamiliar with British culture, however, may regard this convention for queuing to be strange and unnecessary.

d. **Patterns.** It is possible to learn a new culture because cultures are full of patterns. These patterns help us establish and maintain our relationships with one another. For example, a newcomer would learn how people in the UK queue by watching them in supermarkets because everyone behaves in the same way.

### Cultures within our Armed Forces



Although there are similarities inherent across the Services that make up our Armed Forces, they have different cultures too. The Royal Navy naturally sees itself as being quite different to the Royal Air Force, just as one Army regiment sees itself as very different from another. Such differences are normal within any large group.

**The MOD badge** Joint operations, however, require everyone to be able to identify and use commonalities, rather than any differences, as the basis for collaboration. Differences continue to play a role, however, as they bring individual strengths, induce a sense of belonging, as well as providing opportunities for healthy competition and banter.

e. **Dynamism.** Although culture follows patterns and rules, it can and does, change. This can occur in relatively small dimensions in interactions between those around us, or on a much larger scale over a longer period. For example, British culture generally tolerated slavery until, over time, attitudes began to change and the Slavery Abolition Act outlawed such activity in 1833.

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f. **Multiplicity.** Cultural identity is complex. An individual can be part of several groups. Some of these are called 'sub-cultures' because they draw from a wider culture. For example, the culture of our Armed Forces is a sub-culture of British culture. In other cases, a person's multiple cultures can seem quite distinct; a Service person may act very differently with their family than they do with their military colleagues.

107. It is important to think about all aspects of culture and to avoid only focussing on the obvious and different aspects of a group. One way of ensuring that sensitivities and complexities are properly examined is to distinguish between cultural practices and social structures.

a. **Cultural practices.** Cultural practices are immediately observable in a society, such as a style of dress, the way people greet each other, and displaying flags and other symbols. Guides to cultural 'dos and do nots' usually focus on cultural practices as they are the easiest to identify and learn. Recognising a group's cultural practices, however, will only give a superficial understanding of the group and will not necessarily define why people do what they do.

b. **Social structures.** Social structures are the foundations that underlie cultural practices. For example, the physical form of a greeting, such as a handshake or a kiss, is a cultural practice that is visible and can be copied. However, the group's unconscious rules about the relationships between superiors or subordinates, or about how people interact, will influence the choice of whether to use a handshake or kiss when greeting. If we want to understand a group properly, and know how to engage with it, these underlying behavioural drivers need to be examined in depth.

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### Viewing ourselves as others view us

Images of peacekeeping troops wearing UN blue berets and patrolling in conflict zones around the world are pretty unremarkable to the British public and symbolic of well-intentioned intervention. The views of the British public, however, could be significantly different had they seen African or Asian UN peacekeepers patrolling Northern Ireland during the 1980s/1990s. It is sometimes helpful to consider such examples of foreign military intervention in our own context, to challenge our assumptions and interpretations about others.

## Section 3 – Cultural categories

108. In different cultures, aspects of human life are connected in different ways and have varying levels of importance. For example, in some cultures religion heavily influences politics, in others family structures affect employment choices. Sometimes the relationships between such different aspects can be indirect, but to a certain degree they all impact on each other. If Service personnel do not appreciate such interconnections, they will be unable to understand how the local population might react to their presence and activity; this may significantly undermine operations.

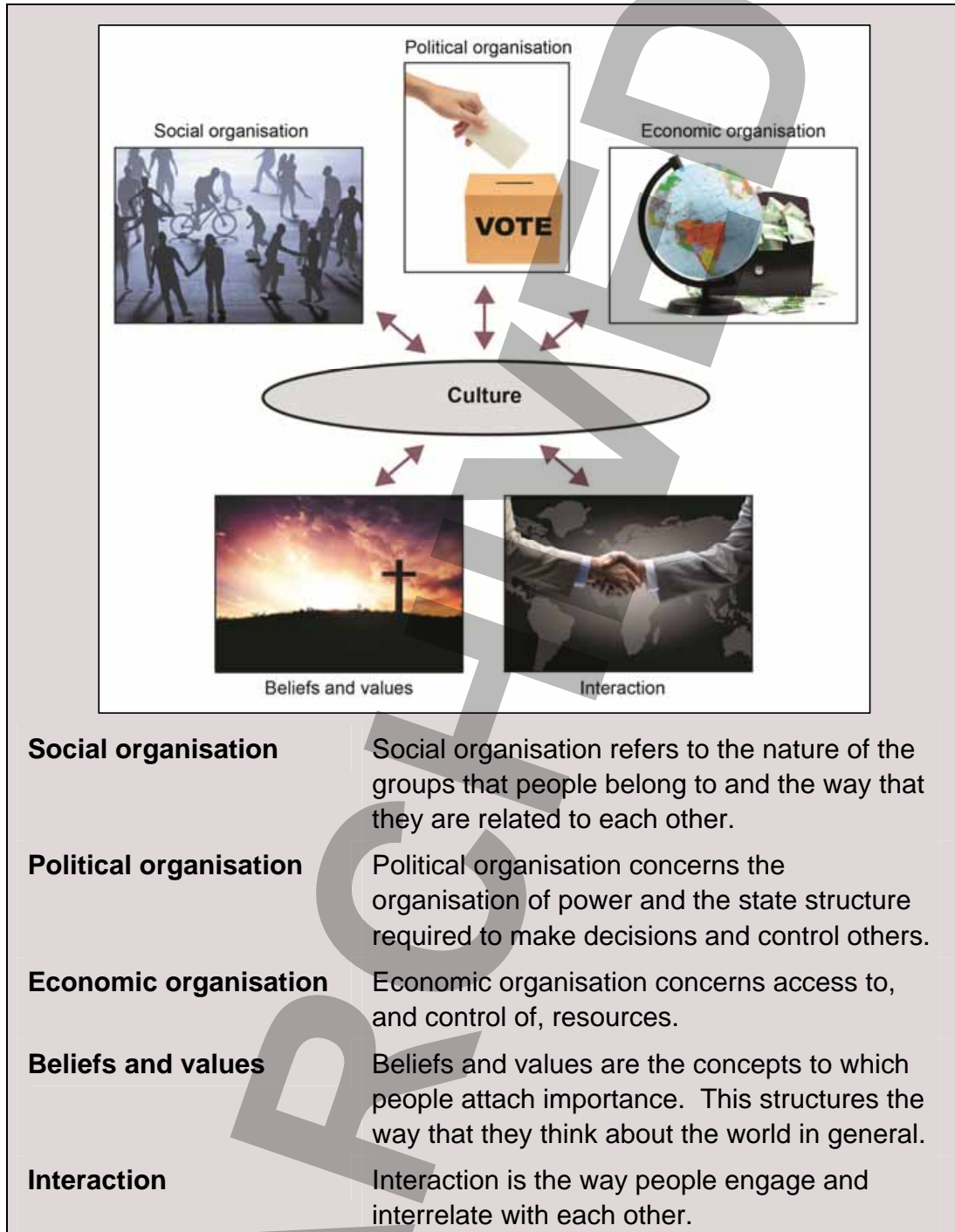
109. It is difficult to break down the overlapping aspects of culture. However, to make the task of understanding any culture (including our own) manageable, it can be useful to think in terms of the categories shown in Figure 1.1.<sup>6</sup> These are not the only categories that can be used when examining culture, but they are perhaps the most easy to understand.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Pictures are from: Social organisation – © solarseven/shutterstock.com; Political organisation – © Sirikorn\_Techatrabhop's/shutterstock.com; Beliefs and values – © Cardens Design/shutterstock.com; Interaction – © EDHAR/shutterstock.com; and Economic organisation – ©Sergii\_Figumyi/shutterstock.com.

<sup>7</sup> Other groupings may be used, but they must be sufficiently exhaustive to capture the complexity of culture.

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**Figure 1.1 – Cultural categories**

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## Section 4 – Social organisation

110. Social organisation refers to the basic building blocks of society. It is about the groups people belong to, how their behaviour is influenced, and how they act throughout their life. While it may seem as though we are free to act in any way we choose, all societies have social norms. We are all restricted by the rules or norms of our groups. These can be simple and visible, such as standing on the right of the escalator, or more complicated, such as how we interact at a family gathering. Understanding social norms is essential if we wish to engage politely and productively with another culture.



**Society comprises many groups<sup>8</sup>**

111. Being aware of the social organisation within a group is critical to understand how groups influence individual behaviour and how they encourage allegiance. Individuals are members of multiple groups, each with its own culture, and each influencing the individual's beliefs and actions.

112. Accepting that we are all members of different groups, it is inaccurate to generalise about a person based on their membership of one group, such as the Taliban, the Royal Air Force or the Labour Party. Also, membership of a particular group may not be permanent; people join and leave groups throughout their lives, by taking up a new job, marrying into a family or changing political parties.

113. The importance of each group in influencing a person's behaviour and beliefs varies according to context. External factors, such as threat or competition, can shape the relevance and meaning of particular groups. For example, bonding among opposing county teams usually increases during national matches, just as single Service rivalries disappear during joint operations. Collectively, membership of these groups, and the influence they have on what we do and believe, helps us define our identity.

114. **Kinship.** Kinship is the fundamental organising principle in all societies. While kinship is often thought to be based on genetics, in practice,

<sup>8</sup> Image from © Jakub Krechowicz/shutterstock.com.



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people can see themselves as related to a wide range of people, some of whom have no genetic or marital link. One may describe a close family friend as an 'aunt' or consider children who are adopted to be related to us without requiring a blood link. Equally, although marriage joins two groups through individuals, in many societies, the alliance between two groups can be more important than the personal relationship between individuals.

### Kinship

In the Middle East, many young children will be taught their family history as soon as they are old enough to speak. In Oman, it is a source of paternal pride for a son to list the names of their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers simply by asking '*bin min*' (son of whom)? Also, in most societies descent through the male side of a family holds more status.

115. **Ethnic groups.** An ethnic group is a group with a common language, history, or tradition. It is often the largest social group of which a person feels they are a part of. Membership of an ethnic group often influences a person's political affiliations. For example, the Singhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka have different languages and religions. This has fuelled an ethnic conflict because the two groups cannot agree how the country should be politically organised.

116. **Race.** Conversely, race is more about biological and visible physical differences between people, although the distinction between race and ethnicity is considered highly problematic. As discussed above, ethnicity is often assumed to be the cultural identity of a group with a common language, history or tradition. Race, however, is assumed to be biological and/or cultural division of a group hierarchy of superiority/inferiority related to their biological constitution. It is assumed that, based on power relations, both 'racialised ethnicities' and 'ethnicised races' exist. Concepts of race and ethnicity cannot be used as separate and autonomous categories. Using the race concept to classify people is a matter of social convention, and can cause stereotyping.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For example, all black people are good at sport, middle eastern people are all Muslim or all white people have no rhythm and can't dance; it is clear from these few examples how separating people purely on racial grounds is inaccurate and can cause offence.

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117. **Nationalism.** Nationalism is a patriotic feeling and the desire for nationhood.<sup>11</sup> A nation can be a group who usually share a culture, language, religion and history; they can often be the same as an ethnic group. Equally, a nation can refer to a specific geographical area with politically defined borders, where ethnic groups do not necessarily originate from.<sup>12</sup> For example, immigrants from Somalia or the Caribbean can be considered part of the British nation. A nation, however, usually wishes to rule itself as a nation state.



**Nationalism is multi-faceted<sup>10</sup>**

118. **Diaspora.** A diaspora is the term used to refer to a dispersed population, and is often the most readily accessible form of cultural insight during planning. However, individuals may have polarised views of a situation, possibly coloured by the reason why they left their native country, and their viewpoint may either be frozen at the point of departure or have evolved subsequently, from observations taken at distance. A diaspora may also include exiled leaders who may be at odds, or have lost influence, with the national population. To counter the risk of personal and cultural bias, a cross-section of views should be canvassed to gain the most balanced insight.

119. **Gender.** While sex refers to the biological differences between male and female bodies, gender is the set of ideas about the role of women and men within society. Gender therefore, describes the traits and behaviours associated with each sex. These traits and behaviours are fluid and they change both within a society over time, and within differing societies. Men and women are equally affected by the expectations of masculinity and femininity, though these expectations differ widely. The public and private roles of men and women can vary. Although in some societies women are restricted from participating in public, political or economic activities, they can be essential to financial decisions within a household, or resolving conflicts

<sup>10</sup> Picture: © donskarpo/shutterstock.com.

<sup>11</sup> Ethnic and national identities are not fixed and, in fact, nationalism is a relatively recent invention that has grown over the past few hundred years.

<sup>12</sup> 'An imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign', Benedict Anderson, Professor Emeritus of International Studies, Government and Asian Studies and author of *Imagined Communities*, 1983.

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within a community. Gender relations affect all aspects of society, including the ways in which men and women work, the right of inheritance or the way that land and resources are used.

120. **Human security.** Contemporary conflicts predominantly affect the civilian population. Women, men, girls and boys all have different experiences and respond differently during armed conflict, peacekeeping, peace building and reconstruction. This means that men and women will have different approaches to their security and different ways of raising and addressing security concerns. The advantages of acknowledging and implementing a gender perspective in operations, is increasingly understood as contributing to the achievement of an enduring peace.<sup>13</sup> Human security is an emerging theory for understanding global vulnerabilities which challenges the traditional notion of national security by arguing that security should be judged on the individual rather than the state. Human security holds that a people-centred view of security is necessary for national, regional and global stability. Although not formally recognised as a security problem, sexual violence will affect the security environment. Rape and other acts of sexual-based violence (subjected to females and males) can occur where vulnerable individuals are working in isolation, for example, in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees.

## **Section 5 – Political organisation**

121. Identifying where authority is held and why, or how it may be influenced, is essential in understanding the nature of a group's political organisation. The way in which societies organise themselves politically, and the way people achieve status, differs between different groups and changes over time. For example, in the Middle Ages it was thought that rulers were divinely appointed by God and that individuals were born subjects. In contrast, most states today accept that the right to govern relies on having obtained the consent of the people.

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<sup>13</sup> Significantly, the UN has for some time promoted gender-related understanding via a number of resolutions. Examples are, UNSCR 1820, *Sexual violence as a tactic of war*, 19 June 2008. UNSCR 1325, *The role of women in peace and security*, 31 October 2000. UNSCR 1960, which reiterates the UN's condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict, 16 December 2010. Implementing UNSCRs is a command responsibility and most headquarters have gender advisors. It is, however, incumbent upon everyone to consider gender perspectives during the planning process.

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122. The UK model of governance (the state) is not the only way of organising people. Indeed, there are different political models, or systems, even within our own society.<sup>14</sup>

a. **Centralised systems.** Centralised systems are most familiar to Europeans. These systems, known as states, tend to have a 'head', who may have been appointed or elected, or who has inherited the role. Below this leader are layers of positions with authority decreasing the further they are from the leader. People submit to the system, willingly or unwillingly, by paying tax or tribute, which in turn funds officials to act on their behalf and provide protection, courts and public facilities, and other mechanisms of state. For a centralised system, like the UK, other centralised systems are relatively easy to engage with, and potentially defeat since there is a single power base to address or attack.<sup>15</sup>

b. **Leadership systems.** In the middle of the spectrum of political systems are those where leaders are followed solely because of their charisma. Group members follow a leader only as long as they see it in their interest to do so, making such systems unstable as they rest almost entirely on the perceived authority and appeal of an individual. If a leader is absent, or challenged by another who claims a greater right, the power of the first leader can quickly dissolve.

c. **Tribal or segmentary systems.** At the other end of the spectrum of political organisation are groups that are not organised hierarchically. Tribes in the Arab world are one example. In the Arab world, tribes are essentially extended kin and are a group of people who believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestor. As well as being a form of social organisation, tribes are sometimes used to organise groups politically. A tribe is a type of segmented society because different segments come together to cooperate when necessary, but equally, they may be in conflict. The same is true at sports matches when supporters of separate local teams might be in

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible to have a democratic state under the reign of a monarch and equally, tribal systems can still exist within what might be considered to be a centralised state.

<sup>15</sup> Examples of centralised states include France and India (non-federal) and Brazil, Canada and the USA (federal). Generally, the difference between the two types is that a federal state has autonomous or 'self-governing' regions as directed by the central government, often via a process of devolution.

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conflict when their teams play one another, but when England plays a foreign nation, all England supporters will usually put aside their differences to support the national team.

**'Ungoverned' space**

There is no such thing as an 'ungoverned' space. Wherever there are people, there is some form of governance or political organisation. We may not, however, recognise this kind of government due to the lack of bureaucracy or hierarchy, and perceive it to be a lawless environment where terrorists and criminals can operate with impunity.

Expecting to see any particular kind of government may make it difficult for us to identify the local system that people are using to govern themselves.

123. **Power.** Individuals have power or status for different reasons. Engaging successfully with those in power depends on understanding why the people around them follow their instructions. In the West, an individual's position within society is often thought to be primarily determined by individual achievement, be that in business or academic career, sporting or artistic success. However, in other societies (and sometimes in our own) status is often inherited through being born into a particular family, ethnic group or religious lineage. In the British military, status is associated with rank or an appointment which, in turn, is based on experience and evidence of success in the past. Outside of our professional role, however, our status in the community is dependent on the prevailing context.

124. **Forms of power.** Generally speaking, power is divided into six separate forms. Considering power in these styles, it is possible to link individual and group leadership styles to power structures.<sup>16</sup>

- a. **Coercive power.** This believes that someone is forced to do something that they do not wish to do; the goal is compliance. This type of power relies on the use of threats and frequently involves abuse.

<sup>16</sup> Taken from a study of power conducted by social psychologists John R. P. French and Bertram Raven, *The Bases of Social Power*. Cartwright D., ed. *Studies in Social Power*, University of Michigan Press Ann Arbor, 1959.

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- b. **Reward power.** This shows the ability to grant another person what they desire, or to remove or decrease what the person does not desire. This type of power is based on the idea that, as a society, we are more prone to do things, and to do them well, when we get something out of it.
- c. **Legitimate power.** This is the ability to transfer feelings of obligation or responsibility. People traditionally obey the person with this power based on their role, position or title rather than the individual leader themselves. Consequently, this type of power can easily be lost once the leader no longer has their position or title. Legitimate power is therefore not strong enough to be the only form of influencing or persuading others.
- d. **Referent power.** This administers a sense of individual personal acceptance or approval of a superior authority. This type of power is strong enough that the leader is often looked up to as a role model with admiration, but approval can also be easily lost. When combined with other forms of power, referent power can be very useful, and is commonly seen in political and military figures.
- e. **Expert power.** This is the ability to persuade via displays of knowledge or expertise, for example, a doctor or lawyer. As a consequence of the expert power or knowledge, a leader is able to convince his subordinates to trust him. The expertise does not have to be genuine, it is the perception of expertise that provides the power base.
- f. **Informational power.** Informational power is based on the potential to use information, via rational arguments, facts or manipulating statistics. How information is used can create a shift in power within a group.



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## **Section 6 – Economic organisation**

125. Access to, and control over, resources affects behaviours and attitudes of people all over the world. How resources are distributed and exchanged differs according to a particular group. The economy in some sub-Saharan African societies is based on livestock trading, and selected leaders accumulate wealth and influence. In comparison, the UK is a state with a developed market system and extensive trade networks. Economic or developmental activities are tailored effectively when we understand where and how people work and how they exchange possessions. Understanding the transactional relationship between individuals or groups can be advantageous when studying the dynamics of local population.

126. Economic systems dictate the way in which people live. Pastoral communities that herd animals will often be nomadic, self-reliant and independent. They are often organised in family or tribal groups, and may prefer not to be tightly linked to a state system. In contrast, agricultural societies are far more dependent on state infrastructure for the exchange of crops at markets and fixed distribution networks. Industrial production is a step further and relies on access to a larger economy and increased competition; the higher dependence on resources requires broader skill specialisation to maximise yield and variety.

127. A state's formal economy comprises structures, such as banking, exchange rates and taxation, which allows business to be regulated, taxed, tracked and measured by the government. Every society, however, also has alternative systems that operate in parallel to the formal system, and are not regulated by the state. In many countries, this is an accepted and necessary way of doing business.

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### Hawala – Islamic exchange system

Although formal banks have existed in Islamic countries for some time, informal credit practices are also a major element of their economies. The Hawala informal money exchange system developed over time to facilitate trade without violating the Islamic ban on interest, and is used across the Islamic world. The system is regularly used by migrant workers to send home wages in regular small transfers, but it is also used for transfers within a country.



**Informal money systems are often used** Individuals deposit money with a Hawaladar (dealer) in their area and the intended recipient then collects it from another Hawaladar in their area. Hawala networks are based on known trusted networks and often linked to distant relatives. They rely on established reputations of both the Hawaladar and the customer. Hawala is not a paperless underground system. Hawaladars keep detailed records and some are supervised by a Hawala Dealers Association. Dealers are well known in their area, deals are transacted before witnesses, and receipts can be produced. Therefore, although it is an informal system because it is not fully regulated by the state, the Hawala system does have its own structures and rules.

128. Goods and services that are not monitored by the state are part of the informal economy. People in positions of power frequently exploit such unregulated systems. For example, a criminal or warlord may demand a form of tax from a group in exchange for security and protection that the state cannot, or does not, provide. In such instances, it is important to consider that the local population might actually be satisfied with this particular exchange mechanism.

129. **Value.** The value of something is often determined by what it can be exchanged for. This may include objects with sentimental value, livestock or even women for marriage. Barter is the direct exchange of one valued item for another. In our society we tend to represent value as money. Coins or notes are only symbols for value; they are not the value itself. The value of

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money lies therefore, not in what it is, but what it can buy; it is made up of units of exchange rather than goods to be used.

130. **Reciprocity.** Exchange is the transfer of items between people and is part of all aspects of life. In order for an exchange to be successful, the item must be viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the receiving party. The item could be human or animal, a material object or even words. Almost all exchange is based on reciprocity; the obligation to give, to receive and to reciprocate. Similarly, when we give gifts, we may subconsciously be expecting a later reciprocal exchange of a favour, display of loyalty, or the sharing of information. The true value of a gift is often social rather than financial.

131. **Patronage.** People who are seen as particularly wealthy may have responsibilities to support the more vulnerable. In such cases patrons provide material support and expect loyalty or service from their clients. Such networks of patronage may be essential for linking together members of a community for mutual support. In societies where a person feels obliged to care for their family, and the family expects their assistance, it is assumed that they will care for their family members. This may include hiring a family member over a stranger, even if the relative lacks the usual qualifications. As long as everyone accepts these rules, the system will work.

132. **Corruption.** Corruption is prevalent in many cultures and can occur at different levels of society. The likelihood of corruption must be taken into account when analysing the human terrain within which operations are taking place. Specific acts of corruption can include bribery, extortion or favouritism, although in some nations corruption is the norm rather than the exception, as in some former Soviet states. Corruption is generally considered at three different levels.

- a. **Petty.** Petty corruption usually occurs on a small scale and within established social frameworks or governing norms. Examples include the exchange of small improper gifts or the use of personal connections to obtain favours. This form of corruption is particularly common in under-developed countries and where public servants are significantly underpaid.

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b. **Grand.** Grand corruption occurs at the highest levels of government in a way that requires significant subversion of the political, legal and economic systems. Such corruption is commonly found in countries with authoritarian or dictatorial governments and in those without adequate policing of corruption by anti-corruption agencies.

c. **Systemic.** Systemic corruption (or endemic corruption) exists due to the weaknesses of an organisation or process. It can be contrasted with individual officials or agents who act corruptly within the system. Factors which encourage systemic corruption include conflicting incentives, discretionary powers or a culture of impunity.

133. **Corrupt practice.** It should be remembered, however, that what we might perceive to be a corrupt practice may be normal and honest in another culture. For example, nominating a family member to a position of power based solely on their relationship, or the offering of gifts may be perfectly legitimate behaviour. It may, therefore, be inappropriate to eradicate such practices, particularly if there is no formal alternative mechanism.

## Section 7 – Beliefs and values

134. **Shared beliefs.** Groups have shared beliefs and values that ensure members' loyalty to the group. Beliefs provide a framework to help those in a group to interpret events and interact with one another in ways that are considered normal. Beliefs explain and justify the way society is organised and how people are expected to behave. They can, however, change and are influenced by other members' behaviour or by external influences. It is very difficult to get an accurate idea of what people believe, because they may not tell us or they may find expressing or explaining beliefs difficult. Belief systems can largely be understood by observing all behaviours, rather than just hearing what people say

135. **Religion.** The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines religion as: the belief in and worship of a super-human controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. A particular system of faith and worship. Religions often serve to explain and justify the world to a particular group and also offer them a way that they can express and process tensions and grievances.

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Formal religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam are based on recognised texts which are passed down over time. Religions of conversion require confirmation of faith in one true God. Polytheism is the belief in more than one god, for example, Hinduism.

136. **Local religious practice.** Although scriptures and doctrine may appear uniform, in practice there is a huge variation in the ways that people interpret them. Even in religions that believe in one god, or the oneness of God, these can include different sects, such as Sunni and Shia Muslims, Catholic and Protestant Christians. Many religious practices can also take place outside formal clerical structures, and draw on local traditions and superstitions. Such practices are often passed by word of mouth rather than forming part of the formal textual guidance.

137. **Ritual.** Rituals are repeated actions that all group members know have particular significance. Rituals are often thought of as being religious, but most people are regularly involved in secular rituals. Remembrance ceremonies are very public rituals, while a child's birthday party is a more private event. Rituals are also used during important stages in a person's life to separate an individual from everyday life and then reintroduce them back into the group with a different status, for example, a Jewish bar mitzvah. The ritual experience can also change the status of an individual within a group. It may increase their status, as is often the case for someone who has undertaken a pilgrimage, or mark a less pronounced alteration in status.

138. **Symbology.** A symbol is something that represents something else by association; sharing an understanding of what particular symbols mean is part of what makes one a member of a particular culture. The cross in Christianity is a symbol of Christ's crucifixion, and therefore is treated with respect. Without knowledge of this history, however, the cross holds no symbolic power. The vast majority of symbols are held in high esteem and understanding their relevance is essential to engage positively with people from other cultures.

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### Symbols with different meanings

In the UK an owl is a symbol of wisdom, yet in Sierra Leone it is a foreteller of doom. A lion can represent Christ in Christian culture, yet in Islamic culture it represents impurity.

### Abusing symbols

National flags are cultural and societal symbols, the abuse of which is a common form of protest. In the past, protestors have burnt Israeli, British and American flags, and in 2004 Iraqi protestors burnt their proposed new national flag. However, the current Iraqi national flag is rarely burnt as it contains the *Takbir* 'Allahu Akbar' ('God is great'), making the desecration of this flag culturally taboo to Muslims.



Proposed Iraqi Flag (2004)



Iraqi Flag (2008 onwards)

139. **Memory.** Memory is not only something that individuals hold privately; groups also have a collective memory. Sometimes a group memory is obvious, such as the recounting of stories, myths or written history that relates to their past. In other cases, memory, and the values associated with it, can be depicted in symbology.<sup>17</sup> Heroic figures are also examples of group memory, as they indicate that the group has agreed their importance. Memories associated with a group's past are not a neutral record of events, rather, particular events are preserved, shaped and interpreted according to the specific needs and challenges faced in the present. Groups can form allegiances or develop entrenched animosity because of understandings about their past.

<sup>17</sup> Such as the red poppy that refers to the battlefields of France during World War I.



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## Section 8 – Interaction

140. All groups have normal ways for members to interact with one another. Interactive styles are part of what visually or verbally defines people as members of the same group. Language is naturally of key importance, but other more subtle indicators can also be evident. These include body language, the way that people dress, how they use space, principles of hospitality and appropriate displays of emotion. These practices give clues about an individual's emotions, reactions and group membership. Interaction with people in ways that make sense to them, is far more likely to achieve the intended goals, than acting in ways that they do not understand or which will offend. Understanding local interaction practices is therefore essential for mission success.

a. **Language.** A language is intimately linked to how individuals interact within their own group, as well as how the group interacts with the outside world. For example, *Verlan* is a version of French slang featuring inversion of word syllables and is common in street and youth language.<sup>18</sup> It is generally limited to one or two key words per sentence, and is a tool for delineating group identity. Ultimately, assumptions cannot therefore be made that a word in one language or context will have a simple and exact equivalent in another language; this highlights the importance of not losing meaning in literal translation.<sup>19</sup> It is equally important to recognise the risk of mis-interpretation when operating within alliances or alongside partner nations.

b. **Appearance.** The way that a person dresses is a result of their role in their group and is often used to indicate their position. What is normal in one group may not be acceptable in another; people who wear sunglasses may not be aware that others may be offended by the fact that they cannot see a person's eyes. People often manipulate styles of dress to assert their own individuality or position, or to suit a particular setting. In addition, hair and body decoration (through piercing or tattoos) can indicate group membership.

<sup>18</sup> It rests on a long French tradition of transposing syllables of individual words to create slang words, the name *verlan* is an example being derived from inverting the syllables in *l'envers* ('the inverse').

<sup>19</sup> An example is the difficulty in designing a 'wanted' poster in Afghanistan, where the word wanted would have required a long sentence to convey the required meaning.

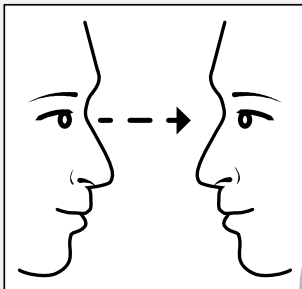
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c. Body language. Body language, including facial expressions and gestures, can indicate someone's feelings and intent. Various groups, however, attribute different meanings to the same gestures. For example, eye contact is considered polite in some cultures, but impolite in others. Often the way in which we share body language with other members of our group is subconscious, but we can also learn them at some point during our upbringing. For example, if greeting friends you will be influenced by how long you have known them, where the meeting is taking place, who else is present, when you last saw them and what has happened since.

### Body language

In the UK, nodding your head up and down generally means 'yes'. The same gesture used in Bulgaria means 'no'. In Kenya, shaking the hand of someone considered important should always be done with two hands as a sign of respect.



**Eye contact is accepted differently in different cultures**

In the UK, intermittent eye contact is important in showing interest and attention. Similarly, in many Middle Eastern cultures, intense eye contact between the same genders is often a symbol of trust accepted in and sincerity. However, between opposite genders, especially in Muslim cultures, anything more than brief eye contact is considered inappropriate. Additionally, in Asian, African and Latin American cultures, extended eye contact can be considered a challenge, while the Japanese tend to consider even brief eye contact uncomfortable.

In western societies, it is expected that individuals should maintain 'personal space' and keep an appropriate distance apart when engaged in conversation. However, in some cultures, such as China, it is normal to be almost touching when doing business.

In Middle Eastern cultures it is offensive to cross an ankle over a knee and display the sole of a shoe, whereas in the West this is a common position to sit in and it does not cause offence.

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141. **Hospitality.** In the West, hospitality is rarely a matter of protection and survival. It is more associated with etiquette and entertainment. Globally, however, it still involves showing respect for one's guests, providing for their needs, and treating them as equals. Cultures and subcultures vary in the extent to which they are expected to show hospitality to strangers, as opposed to personal friends or members of their in-group.

#### Hospitality

**Afghanistan.** The Pakhtun people of South-Central Asia, pre-dominant in Afghanistan, have a strong code of hospitality. They are characterised by their use of an ancient set of ethics, the first principle of which is *Milmastiya* or hospitality.

**India.** In India, hospitality is based on the principle *Atithi Devo Bhava*, meaning 'the guest is God'. This principle is shown in a number of stories where a guest is literally a god who rewards the provider of hospitality. From this stems the Indian approach of graciousness towards guests at home, and in all social situations.

**Japan.** Hosts will often go to great lengths to be hospitable as the guest takes priority and will be seated in the best place, served the best food and drinks, and generally deferred to. Japanese hosts wish to appear busy, as opposed to western hospitality styles where the host appears relaxed to convince guests that everything is taken care of and they may also relax.

142. **Sharing food and drink.** Sharing food and drink is a central way of creating group cohesion and maintaining relationships. Offering a cup of tea is rarely just about satisfying someone's thirst. It can also be a small, but important, part of building a relationship. Many societies have explicit obligations towards guests, such as providing them with protection or food, and sometimes this carries a reciprocal expectation of trust and allegiance being placed on the guest.

143. **Eating habits.** Most groups have norms about how and what they eat. Some of these are formal religious regulations, such as the Jewish and Muslim prohibition on eating pork, others are less formal but still widely held, such as the British distaste for the idea of eating dog or horse. Sharing these

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kinds of conventions defines a particular group, and creates perceptions in the minds of observers.

144. **Emotion.** Different groups display emotions in different ways which have differing levels of acceptance. This can be seen by the changes in our own society, where the sharing of feelings is encouraged for both men and women. Some groups consider showing anger to be a strength, others see it as a weakness, but this does not mean that people in the latter group do not get frustrated. Ultimately, we must be careful not to judge attitudes or values purely on perceived emotions.



Humans can display a variety of emotions

#### Anger

In many cultures anger has a negative interpretation as the expression of rage. However, for speakers of Zulu, it can also have a positive side due to its association with intense activity. In Zulu culture, an active person is more highly valued than a person who is idle or indifferent, hence someone who appears angry is seen in a more positive light.

145. **Honesty.** The content of information and how widely it is disseminated is dependent on the extent to which a group sees trust and honesty as a valuable trait. Many groups engage with others whom they do not necessarily like or wish to engage with over any length of time, but pretend that their intentions are honest to gain benefit.

#### Lying and honour

In Lebanese village society, lying is perceived as fundamental to everyday life in that it gives the individual an element of flexibility. The truth is only owed to those people with moral worth. Lying is also associated with imagination and a quick wit, and the ability to outmanoeuvre one another verbally is developed from an early age. In this context, lying is viewed as acceptable in the normal social environment.

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published by Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)

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## Chapter 2 – Culture and human terrain in the operating environment

‘When I took a decision or adapted an alternative, it was after studying [many factors]. Geography, tribal structure, religion, social customs, language, appetites, standards of all were at my finger ends. The enemy I knew almost like my own side.’

Colonel T E Lawrence<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 2 describes culture in the context of complex military operations.

201. Our Armed Forces are required to operate with allies, civilian agencies and local communities within a complex, joint operating environment. They will need to interact with different cultures and face adversaries, all of whom may have different beliefs, political structures and approaches to warfare.<sup>2</sup>

202. In the contemporary operating environment, we must know about our adversaries’ core capabilities **and** understand the context within which they, and non-combatants, operate. This includes their institutions, culture, fears, perceptions, motivations and history.<sup>3</sup> The key to full understanding is appreciating the role of people, locally and globally, as:

- state and non-state actors;
- populations;
- organisations; and
- groups or individuals.

203. The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)’s, *Future Character of Conflict* paper highlights a number of areas where cultural

<sup>1</sup> 26 June 1933, cited in US Army Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin, *Cultural Awareness*, April-June 2006.

<sup>2</sup> The joint operational environment is defined as: the overall space, conditions and surroundings within which military forces operate. Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 2-00, *Understanding and Intelligence Support to Joint Operations*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

<sup>3</sup> In this publication, the term *non-combatants* includes non-belligerents, the local populations and neighbouring states.



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understanding is likely to be important to exploit opportunities in contingency and expeditionary operations.<sup>4</sup>

204. Cultural misunderstandings can occur when we interpret others behaviour against an inappropriate context or fail to take sensitivities into account. These cultural differences can result in friction, potentially spiralling into mistrust, increased tensions, or attacks from those outside or inside.<sup>5</sup> A lack of cultural understanding can also have strategic implications when an incident is broadcast by the media almost instantly, influencing opinions worldwide. For example, any damage to a place of worship during military operations can swiftly spread negative feelings to the wider diaspora. It also damages credibility and public opinion, unsettles the political narrative and potentially encourages retaliation.

**A cultural mistake at the strategic level**

An example of a cultural error at the strategic level is President George W Bush's *crusade* remark, made in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. During unscripted comments during a press conference given at the White House on 16 September 2001, President Bush stated, "this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while".

From the perspective of contemporary US culture, this was a harmless statement as a crusade is understood to be a remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm. President Bush, however, did not take into account that, viewed from a different cultural perspective, the word 'crusade' could be interpreted very differently.

In the words of one Islamic scholar, 'it recalled the barbarous and unjust military operations against the Muslim world by Christian knights, who launched repeated attempts to capture Jerusalem over the course of several hundred years'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) Strategic Trends Programme, [Future Character of Conflict](#) dated February 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Such tensions can develop into what are known as insider threats.

<sup>6</sup> Bensheikh S, *Grand Mufti of Marseilles Mosque*, quoted in Ford P, *Europe Cringes at Bush 'Crusade' against Terrorists*, The Christian Science Monitor, 19 September 2001.

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Although the White House quickly issued a statement expressing regret at the use of the term, it rapidly entered the Islamist lexicon as shorthand for the US in particular (and the West in general) as aggressive enemies of Islam, which should be opposed.

This view existed long before President Bush spoke, but this avoidable mistake, occasioned by insufficient cultural advice, gave his opponents an unwelcome opportunity.

## **Section 1 – Cultural understanding**

205. Wherever possible military commanders should obtain advice from cultural specialists who have a deep understanding of the area concerned, particularly those with current experience. Such specialists may be military or civilian, drawn from academia, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development, or expatriates who have experience and an intimate knowledge of the region.<sup>7</sup> They can also be military intelligence liaison officers (MILOs) or defence attaches (DAs).

206. For commanders at the strategic level, cultural understanding is useful when considering the interaction of actors nationally or internationally, as well as helping national leaders make informed decisions. It also has a critical role in informing operational and tactical commanders of the human terrain within which their forces are operating.

207. Cultural information has a pivotal role in providing commanders with an understanding of their area of interest and preparing them to engage with the population. In particular, this awareness can indicate which individuals, such as religious leaders or tribal elders, may hold influence at regional or national levels. Cultural capability can play a role greater than just influencing the local community, and can deliver a significant effect supporting the commander's objectives.

<sup>7</sup> In the UK there are a number of expatriate communities that could provide advice on the culture of their homeland, and UK citizens living abroad might also be able to provide a different insight.

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208. Analysing cultural influences, interrelationships, core beliefs, motives and perceptions is also integral to understanding the operating environment. This is vital to identify cultural sympathies and divisions between an opponent and the population. The resultant evaluation and selection of courses of action should therefore include a thorough consideration of cultural analysis, while recognising that, while knowledge of culture is useful in predicting individual or group behaviour, it should not be seen as an absolute answer.

209. Analysing cultural factors, as well as the economic and political value of a particular target, helps us understand how a population could react to either destroying or protecting the target. For example, planning to capture a high value individual must also take into account unintended consequences. This could include the:

- impact on the neighbourhood surrounding the objective;
- shift in the local balance of power; and
- effect should the target be killed or subsequently freed.

210. Cultural understanding should not always focus on an adversary. In the future, we are likely to operate as part of a coalition that is also likely to include an element of partnering and mentoring to achieve the mission.<sup>8</sup> Partnering and mentoring involves supporting another group of people, often a host nation's armed forces, to develop good military practice.<sup>9</sup> Coalition operations will also require an enhanced awareness of differing cultures at both the individual and collective level.

211. Both these scenarios are most likely to succeed if we understand their national, organisational and individual cultures and adapt our approach accordingly. Recent initiatives for enhanced bilateral military cooperation with France, putting NATO at the centre of UK defence, and any other relationships will test our cultural understanding from the outset.

<sup>8</sup> Partnering not only includes military alliances, but also a wide range of organisations, such as other government departments and non-governmental organisations, industry and contractors.

<sup>9</sup> Further details on partnering and mentoring are included in Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 6/11 [Partnering Indigenous Forces](#).

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212. Notwithstanding that we need coherence and understanding among friendly forces, being able to predict what an adversary is doing, and why, is central to all military planning. Appreciating an adversary's motivation from their perspective, rather than our own, will offer you a more nuanced and accurate intelligence assessment.

213. Future operations are likely to be conducted in close proximity to, or within, population centres. This will create a confused operating environment that is densely populated, possibly with dissatisfied and disadvantaged people, some of whom may be armed and/or organised. *Target audience analysis* involves the systematic study of the population and can assist with removing some of this confusion, as well as enhancing our understanding of a military psychological environment.<sup>10</sup>

214. Such analysis is an enabler for psychological or other operations aimed at achieving the required behavioural change.<sup>11</sup> Target audience research may therefore be more focused than the wider perspective taken by the cultural specialist. A deep understanding of the local and national culture can be a significant force multiplier.

215. Moreover, being able to identify and influence our adversaries' vulnerabilities, or convince a community that it is in their best interests to work with us, reduces risk and the need for lethal action. Such activity will influence how we plan key leader engagement and contact with other parts of the community, such as females or 'hard to reach' groups.<sup>12</sup> Robust research can identify significant factors that can influence our approach.

- a. **Root causes.** An improved understanding of the culture of the population helps us to understand the underlying causes of a conflict. In turn, we are able identify how we can address the issues.

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<sup>10</sup> A target audience is defined as: an individual or group selected for influence or attack by means of psychological operations. Allied Administrative Publication (AAP)-06, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, 2013 edition.

<sup>11</sup> Psychological operations are: planned activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievements of political and military objectives. AAP-06, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, 2013 edition.

<sup>12</sup> Key leader engagement is a deliberate intelligence-informed process of influencing specific individuals and the groups they lead.

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- b. **Power structures.** Knowledge of which power or status model is in control will assist us to generate a joint effect and influence the population. Such understanding is essential for identifying shaping opportunities during the planning stage that seek to change the circumstances that may exist in an area.
- c. **Alienation.** Forces do not necessarily need to completely win the hearts and minds of the indigenous people outright, but success in operations relies on a measure of compliance and support from the local population. Increased understanding of what is abnormal and unacceptable for a group of people will help avoid taking action that alienates us from their wishes. For example, the media reports of troops not respecting the sensitivities relating to the Koran.<sup>13</sup>
- d. **Collection activities.** Successful collection relies heavily on a good understanding of the needs, hopes and motivations of the target audience. With better understanding of how people behave and what they believe, we can better appreciate what is important to them and how they might react, rather than what we think should be important.

**Good intentions lost**

In Afghanistan, the water supply for a local village was some distance away, meaning that the local women had to travel each day to fetch water. To make the women's life easier and build rapport with the villagers, military forces provided a water supply to the village. But, after being installed, the water system was deliberately damaged. The system was repaired – only to be damaged again.

When cultural specialists investigated the matter, the reason became clear. Despite the distance to the water supply, the womenfolk valued the daily journey to fetch water as this was their only escape from the village environment. So, although the ISAF commander thought that providing water within the village boundary would critically enhance the women's quality of life, it actually removed their treasured opportunity.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/03/AR2005060301654.html>

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e. **Retribution.** Knowing how a population is likely to react to a specific course of action can help us avoid unwanted reactions and protect our forces. An action that may seem to satisfy routine requirements or targeting protocols, can inadvertently cause considerable loss of face and/or lead to retribution. Retribution could be subsequent attacks by a group or individual from outside, or from inside. This means we need to be aware of personnel sensitivities, as well as culturally-sensitive locations or geographic features.

**Different cultures – same respect?**

An Australian officer from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Counter-insurgency Advisory and Assistance Team reported a conversation he had with an Afghan colonel from an Afghan National Army Brigade. The Australian officer asked how the Afghan officer thought the partnering efforts were going. The Afghan colonel replied that he was disappointed.

He acknowledged that ISAF offered his troops tremendous training opportunities and appreciated their support during combat patrols. He could not, however, reconcile one issue. On a daily basis, this Afghan officer observed ISAF soldiers saluting their seniors. They saluted seniors from their own services, from their home nations, even those from other partner nations, but almost no one saluted him.

The Australian officer watched more closely. He saw that ISAF troops offered military courtesies to almost everyone, except their Afghan counterparts. He was unsure whether this was because ISAF did not understand Afghan ranks or thought less of their Afghan partners, or did not consider them as professional as themselves. Regardless, this senior Afghan officer felt both personally and professionally snubbed by the troops with whom he was attempting to partner, and considered his own authority and legitimacy undermined.

Subsequent education in Afghan military insignia and an emphasis on the courtesies to be paid to all superiors, regardless of nationality, corrected the situation and removed an issue that could have developed into more widespread discontent.



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## **Section 2 – Risks**

216. If we fail to appreciate the significance of culture, we increase the risk of mission or campaign failure. It creates barriers to successful interaction and can lead to alienation and may turn benign actors into adversaries. Cultural capability reduces these risks and creates an understanding of adversaries and local populations. At the tactical level, this will improve awareness and the intelligence preparation of the operating environment, thereby giving us a more complete understanding. So that we get the best possible understanding of culture, there are some core considerations that should always be kept in mind.

- Matters taken for granted at home will probably be different elsewhere.
- Similarities with our culture may be ignored or considered irreconcilably different, but there will often be areas of common ground.
- Basic concepts such as honesty, fairness, respect, winning and ownership, can mean fundamentally different things to others.
- We must be prepared to cope with confusing situations that arise when cultures meet.
- We risk making superficial assessments when time is limited, resulting in generalisations.
- ‘Over-immersion’ can occur when an individual becomes too deeply immersed and overly sympathetic within a different culture.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This can lead to commanders receiving advice from an unexpectedly biased perspective.

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### Section 3 – Physical environments

217. We must consider culture in all environments. All operations will have an effect on people, whether they are in close contact, some distance away, or on the peripheries. Consequently, a full regional understanding is required.<sup>15</sup>

218. Cultural capability enables commanders to consider how military activity could achieve effect through lethal or non-lethal means. Cultural considerations may shape the balance of fires and manoeuvre, as well as providing specific support to information activities and outreach. Ultimately, understanding culture across the spectrum of actors will be a major contributor in countering increasingly hybrid threats.

219. Linguist support is very likely to be a requirement for engaging with the local population. Planners should consider the importance of interpreters and basic language training for deploying forces.<sup>16</sup> Ideally, military personnel bring both language and cultural understanding to the operation, but these do not always have to be delivered by the same individual.

220. Someone with a good cultural understanding can often use an interpreter to very good effect, providing them with the opportunity to observe, as well as communicate, rather than focussing primarily on an accurate vocabulary. Equally though, someone with cultural **and** language skills may more easily build personal relationships and operate independently. Each situation should be judged on its own merit.<sup>17</sup>

221. **Maritime.** The maritime environment includes both the littoral zone and open seas. In the former, cultural issues are similar to those for the land environment, although it may present the first contact with local populations. On the open seas, direct contact with combatants and non-combatants is less frequent. That said, whether it is the crew of a merchant vessel or potentially hostile armed groups in small boats, a sound understanding of the cultural

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<sup>15</sup> Cultural and human terrain analysis is carried out by individual intelligence assessment centres. For example, the Maritime Intelligence Fusion Centre produce port influence reports which detail culture and human terrain information in support of ship visits.

<sup>16</sup> JDN 1/13, [Linguistic Support to Joint Operations](#) provides more detail on language capability.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

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drivers of the individuals and groups that may be encountered is critical. Even during routine port visits cultural issues need to be recognised. To this end, the Maritime Intelligence Fusion Centre includes human terrain analysis in all port guides.

**Cultural specialists on ships**

The Royal Navy frequently deploys to areas where sailors and marines will encounter different cultural perspectives. Deploying maritime cultural specialists ensures that appropriate advice is available to promote better cultural understanding. This builds mutual trust and assists with key leader engagement.

In 2011, a cultural specialist was embarked on HMS ALBION as advisor to the Commander UK Task Group in the Persian Gulf. This specialist was able to provide advice on local politics and sensitive issues to the Task Group while they conducted operations and exercises with partners. This was also useful when HMS ALBION made an official visit to the United Arab Emirates during the commemoration of *Israa and Mirja*, which marks the ascension of the Prophet Mohammad. The Ship's Company were briefed in advance on what they should do, what they should not do, places to avoid, and how to dress. The cultural specialist also acted as the liaison officer for local dignitaries and high-ranking military officers who visited the ship, back-briefing guests about Royal Navy customs and etiquette. Post-deployment feedback emphasised the value of the embarked cultural specialist and how the capability promoted good relations.



**Cultural specialists have an important role to play at sea,  
as well as on land**

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Culture and human terrain in the operating environment

222. **Land.** It is during land-based operations that the need for cultural capability is most obvious. Land-based operations are conducted within the population. It is here that culturally inappropriate actions can have a dramatic effect. For example, the act of a single soldier can offend religious or cultural beliefs of many, and result in the attitude of a whole community changing from supportive to antagonistic. It can also quickly produce considerable negative media coverage that can influence international public opinion.

### Cultural specialists in land operations

In Afghanistan, a cultural specialist noticed friction between some members of ISAF and Afghan forces. Knowing there had already been a small number of fratricidal shootings, he realised the situation was sufficiently serious to develop into a lethal incident.



#### Close interaction aids understanding

The cultural specialist researched the cause of these frictions by talking with members of both sides in a number of locations. It became apparent that the tension was over money. ISAF had been paying the Afghan Army to provide food for their meetings with local nationals. The Afghans, however, realised that they could provide food at a handsome profit and wanted ISAF to pay for them to provide food for *all* gatherings of local nationals. ISAF did not agree as food was not required at every meeting; arguments usually ensued and relationships became strained.

The cultural specialist discussed the situation with the local ISAF commander and suggested a simple solution. Along with the local Afghan commander, a new policy would be promulgated that food would only be provided for special occasions and not for routine meetings. Also, a rate per head for providing the food would be agreed and this would be introduced gradually with all extant agreements being honoured. When the plan was implemented the source of friction was removed and the relationship between ISAF and the Afghan Army relaxed. The cultural specialist had provided a unique viewpoint. His language skills and knowledge of Afghan culture were critical in solving this particular issue.

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Culture and human terrain in the operating environment

223. **Air.** The nature of operations within the air environment would suggest that the need for cultural awareness is less relevant than in the maritime or land environments, but this is not always the case. Wherever operations have an effect on the population, there is a need to understand and plan for local people's culturally specific interpretation of our actions, and any resulting unintended consequences. These may be as simple as the impact of low flying or the risk of falsely identifying celebratory fire as threats. Additionally, air operations often rely on host nation support, which requires careful and culturally sensitive cooperation.

**Cultural specialists in the air environment**

During Operation HERRICK, overflights of populated areas by fast jets were conducted intending to show force and reassure the local population. This technique had proved a successful tactic in other theatres, such as Sierra Leone.

In Afghanistan, however, instead of reassuring the general populace, it brought back memories of the Soviet occupation. Soviet doctrine at that time stressed the primacy of offensive air operations to shock and stun opponents and they used air power against civilians.

If we had fully considered culture during the planning stages, we may have identified a better way of balancing the need to deter adversaries with the desire to reassure the general population.



**The same military activity can have  
different effects in different theatres**

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Specialist cultural capability

## Chapter 3 – Specialist cultural capability

‘We did not have enough depth in our cultural understanding. This is something that takes years to grow and is something that needs determined effort to achieve.’

Brigadier T A Beckett<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 3 describes the types of cultural capabilities available to us. It also shows how they are integrated into force preparation and operations.

### Section 1 – Cultural information

301. Within the UK, no single organisation provides all our cultural capability and advice. Instead, responsibilities are shared between several organisations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Figure 3.1 provides examples of organisations that have access to cultural information and expertise.<sup>2</sup>

	MOD providers	Non-MOD providers
<b>Strategic</b>	Defence Intelligence <sup>3</sup>	Cabinet Office assessment staff
<b>Operational</b>	Defence Intelligence Permanent Joint Headquarters Joint Task Force Headquarters Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (DCSU)	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Department for International Development (DFID) Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre
<b>Tactical</b>	DCSU All Sources Analysis Cell Cultural specialists	Non-government organisations Allies/host nations Academia

**Figure 3.1 – Responsibility for providing cultural information**

<sup>1</sup> Commander 20 Armoured Brigade, Operation TELIC 13.

<sup>2</sup> The organisation for generating and delivering cultural and language capabilities is under review. See Defence Language and Cultural Capability Management Board draft paper *Defence Culture and Language Policy*, 24 July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Defence Intelligence, primarily Human Factors, who lead on strategic cultural assessment, but also the Joint Forces Intelligence Group, the Defence Geographic Centre and the Defence Geospatial Intelligence Fusion Centre.



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302. **Defence Cultural and Specialist Unit.** The Defence Cultural and Specialist Unit (DCSU) is our centre of excellence for cultural capability. It comprises cultural specialists from all three Services. The unit is responsible for training and force generating cultural specialists to support operations and standing tasks. The DCSU also provides the focus for developing and supporting cultural capability across Defence.

303. **Cultural capability.** Cultural capability must be coordinated, de-conflicted and shared, if we are to optimise information and expertise. The Defence Cultural Specialist Unit acts as the Defence focal point for such capability and maintains links with many sources, including:

- Defence Intelligence;
- other government departments;
- inter-governmental organisations;
- academia; and
- any other relevant sources.

Within Defence Intelligence, the Joint Forces Intelligence Group is responsible for providing geospatial foundation data, including human geography. They can also provide cultural and psychological assessment teams.

304. **Foreign and Commonwealth Office.** The FCO country desk officers are responsible for implementing UK foreign policy objectives for their geographic areas of focus, on behalf of the Foreign Secretary. FCO research analysts provide analysis of strategic political, social and economic developments, including historical and forward-looking perspectives. They work closely with academic and research institutions, such as Chatham House, to ensure that customers are aware of outside experts' views.

305. **Department for International Development.** DFID desk officers know about activities in specific countries, opportunities for developmental change, and factors affecting progress. DFID has specialist advisors who commission research into what works and why, to inform how development

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funding is used.<sup>4</sup> Most embassies and DFID officers overseas commission analysis locally, through research experts and non-governmental organisations. They will normally have a deeper understanding of the specific context than their UK-based colleagues.

306. **Stabilisation Unit.** The Stabilisation Unit is a cross-government unit shared by the MOD, FCO and DFID. They deploy experts to conflict-affected countries and support parent departments with cross-government planning for conflict contexts. The Stabilisation Unit can enhance cooperation between other government departments and share information about stabilisation and conflict issues. This includes analysing community-based approaches to conflict, monitoring and evaluation, and cultural context, religion and gender.

## Section 2 – Training and force preparation

307. Everyone has their own culture. Consequently, they inherently have their own biases, prejudices and stereotypes. Overcoming personal perceptions may take time and we cannot expect individuals to become culturally aware of a population in a short read-in period. The most effective cultural training and preparation should take place over an extended period. Sometimes, however, this is not available prior to an operational deployment or assignment overseas. To try and achieve the best standard (in what will likely be compressed timescales), elements of cultural training should be considered on career courses for all personnel.

308. **Types of cultural training.** There are three types of cultural training – general, specific and self-awareness.

- a. **General training.** General training aims to provide a generic understanding of cultural dynamics and influences, and their implications regarding personal interactions. The knowledge and skills taught can apply to any foreign cultural context. This training provides a good base for those interacting with multiple nations, for example, when working as part of a multinational force. General training provides the foundation for deeper pre-deployment cultural training.

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<sup>4</sup> They cover areas such as conflict, social development, economics, governance, infrastructure, health, education and statistics.

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b. **Specific training.** Specific training focuses on developing understanding of a specific cultural context aligned with the five cultural categories.<sup>5</sup> The Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan will determine the depth of this training required by force elements.<sup>6</sup> Ideally, culture specific training forms part of pre-deployment or pre-assignment training.

c. **Self-awareness training.** Within general training, a complementary training approach is cultural self-awareness training. This enables individuals to identify and understand their own subconscious cultural traits and rules. By understanding personal norms, individuals can approach unfamiliar scenarios and gauge others' reactions better. Combining general and self-awareness training, focuses an individual's mind on other cultures and is an excellent foundation for specific training.

309. **Cultural skill levels.** Cultural training is designed to provide different standards of cultural capability to support operations. It requires developing cultural expertise in areas where operations are likely to take place, together with more general cultural awareness. Cultural training delivers three levels of cultural capability.

a. **Level 1 – Awareness.** Cultural awareness provides a basic knowledge of cultural issues, an understanding of their importance and impact, and the ability to use this knowledge in predictable scenarios to create a desired effect.

b. **Level 2 – Competence.** Cultural competence provides an intermediate knowledge of cultural issues. We are able to comprehend their importance and impact, and apply this knowledge, skill and attitude to unpredictable scenarios to help us analyse the effect. Cultural competence is achieved by interacting daily with another culture either directly (where basic language skills have been achieved) or, more likely, through an interpreter. This approach

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1 Section 3. In the military context, understanding is: the perception and interpretation of a particular situation in order to provide the context, insight and foresight required for effective decision-making. Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 04, [Understanding](#).

<sup>6</sup> There will also be linkages to the emerging Joint Forces Commander Joint Warfare Contingent Capability Requirements Standards (CCRS) process.

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requires confidence, interest and a willingness to succeed, delivering a high degree of cultural competence.

c. **Level 3 – Expertise.** Cultural expertise is an advanced knowledge of cultural issues. An expert can:

- comprehend the importance and impact of cultural matters;
- apply this knowledge;
- deal with unpredictable scenarios; and
- evaluate the cultural effectiveness.

It requires immersion into a culture and generally develops in concert with the ability to think with the same mindset. Developing expertise is a long-term process, requiring significant investment to provide cultural immersion opportunities. Selecting individuals for such opportunities focuses on their aptitude to develop such expertise. The necessary attributes may not necessarily be those required for other military roles.

310. **Delivering cultural training.** Cultural training should ensure that all individuals have one of the three capability levels described above. Operational requirements will be articulated in the appropriate Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan.<sup>7</sup> We should deliver general training to all personnel when opportunities arise so that we develop transferable skills that can be used in all cultural contexts. We can then enhance this with further specific training as required. Figure 3.2 identifies preferred training requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> Written by cultural specialists.

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Category	Remarks
<b>General culture training</b>	
<b>Other ranks</b>	Most junior personnel only require cultural awareness training. Promotion levels may require greater cultural understanding.
<b>Officers</b>	Officers should get cultural competence training so they are prepared to engage in international contexts.
<b>Cultural specialist</b>	Cultural specialists must be trained to expertise level on appointment.
<b>Specific culture training</b>	
<b>All ranks</b>	All ranks must get pre-deployment cultural awareness training.
<b>Cultural specialist</b>	Particular roles, such as defence attachés or foreign area specialists, must have specific training (bespoke if necessary) as well as general pre-deployment training.

**Figure 3.2 – Individual cultural training requirements**

311. **Collective training.** Cultural training is largely an individual activity, but collective activities should be set in an appropriate cultural context. This will test cultural capability in a practical manner, and allow cultural specialists to practise their skills, from initial planning to execution. Individual performance in such scenarios should be included in the exercise debrief. Exercise scenario writers and controllers should also seek cultural advice when designing and implementing collective training, to ensure they deliver realistic and challenging human terrain vignettes. This will prepare command teams and deploying forces for operations in a complex human terrain.

312. **Cultural specialist language training.** As well as culture training, cultural specialists need to have a level of linguistic ability to work effectively. Language training can be delivered by integrating it with cultural training to enable a greater understanding. The Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan will specify the level of language and the number of specialists required for each operation. The default setting, however, should be the NATO standard

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language profile at Figure 3.3.<sup>8</sup> This level of training will ensure that specialists can interact effectively without relying on interpreters.<sup>9</sup>

<b>Ability</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Listening</b>	3 – professional	Able to understand most formal and informal speech on practical, social, and professional topics, including particular interests and special fields of competence.
<b>Speaking</b>	3 – professional	Able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.
<b>Reading</b>	2 – functional	Sufficient comprehension to read simple authentic written material on familiar subjects.
<b>Writing</b>	1 – survival	Can write to meet immediate personal needs. (For example, produce lists, short notes, post cards, short personal letters, phone messages and invitations as well as filling out forms and applications).

**Figure 3.3 – NATO standard language profile**

**Lost in translation**

Following an unsuccessful information operations campaign, Task Force Helmand launched an inquiry into what had gone wrong. The campaign was based around a picture of ISAF killing insurgents who were depicted as rats.

The campaign failed on two counts. Not only do many Afghans not consider the rat in the same way they are regarded by Europeans, but it is also highly insulting in Afghanistan to depict people as animals. Instead, Afghans associate the rat with farming vermin, in a similar way to how British people may view a rabbit. When questioned by ISAF about the theme of the advert, many Afghans suggested that ISAF would launch an operation to kill rats.

<sup>8</sup> NATO standard language profiles are contained in STANAG 6001, Language Proficiency Levels, edition 4.

<sup>9</sup> Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1/13, [Linguistic Support to Joint Operations](#), contains the complete table of language proficiency.



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### Section 3 – The role of the cultural specialist

313. The cultural specialist's role is to provide an enhanced cultural understanding of an area to support operational planning, preparation, execution, campaign continuity and assessment of effect. Military cultural specialists are currently trained to operate at the tactical level, with higher-level advice being provided by civilian or reservist specialists who can provide deeper, or more focused, perspectives. In the future, however, it can be expected that cultural specialists will also operate at strategic and operational levels.

314. Cultural specialists can act as both general staff officers in headquarters, as collection assets, or delivery mechanisms on the ground, as they interact with, observe, and understand the local population. Discussed below are the four main ways they can contribute.

- a. **Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan.** During the initial phases of operational planning, the Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan is generated along with the *intelligence estimate* and as part of the overall *operational estimate*. Cultural specialists represent the population during the planning process, providing a picture of the population and an understanding of how joint action could be perceived by the local population. This activity needs to provide an outline as quickly as possible because cultural awareness is important from the outset. The Cultural Risk and Requirements Plan is an iterative document which is revised as an operation develops. Culture and human terrain considerations for the operational estimate are at Annex 3A.

#### Cultural input into planning

In Afghanistan in 2011, cultural specialists provided knowledge of the agricultural cycle and highlighted that poppy fields would be flooded during a planned UK operation. They noted that flooding the fields was a classic defence by farmers if they felt that there was a threat of destroying the crop. Similarly, the cultural specialist advised on the negative second order effects created when tracked vehicles were used on agricultural land. This knowledge had a direct impact on resupply and casualty evacuation plans.

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- b. **Collection.** Although not a dedicated intelligence asset, cultural specialists can actively gather human terrain and cultural information, in support of the Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs) by engaging with key leaders and other local individuals or committees. Opportunities for cultural specific collection should be identified during the planning phase. The product of this activity will be collated with other reference material including mapping and geospatial information to provide a spatial framework to support later analysis.<sup>10</sup>
- c. **Advice.** Cultural specialists advise commanders and staff on the cultural impact of their operations and the potential unintended consequences of any military activity. They can highlight key leaders and influential locals that may be encountered and advise on ways they could be positively influenced.
- d. **Influence.** Cultural specialists will often be able to speak the local language and will spend a significant amount of time interfacing with them. This allows them to build relations and develop a greater understanding of the local atmosphere and cultural nuances. This unique position has a central contribution to joint action.

#### Section 4 – Cultural input to intelligence

315. Commanders at all levels rely upon their intelligence staff to supply them with a single intelligence narrative. This forms the nucleus of the 'understand' function and informs decision-making. The single intelligence narrative integrates assessments of elements such as the operating environment and adversaries, with a key component being understanding the human terrain.

316. Although human terrain analysis uses specific techniques, we must understand that it is not conducted separately to the intelligence cycle. Rather, it is an integrated and inseparable element of it.<sup>11</sup> While the

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that cultural specialists may need protecting either through being embedded in patrols or having specific escorts to carry out collection.

<sup>11</sup> JDP 2-00, [Understanding and Intelligence Support to Joint Operations](#), Chapter 3 describes the intelligence cycle in detail.

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intelligence staffs are responsible for running the intelligence cycle, cultural specialists significantly contribute to all of its functions.

a. **Direction.** Direction defines the Commander's Critical Information Requirements from which intelligence requirements are distilled. Some intelligence requirements will belong to the human terrain, and cultural specialists will be asked for their advice on how best to approach specific requirements. This is an iterative process, with intelligence requirements being continually reviewed and updated. Cultural specialists should be fully engaged in the intelligence requirements process, suggesting amendments or additions as appropriate.

b. **Collection.** As well as their more central advisory role, cultural specialists are an important non-dedicated collection means for matters pertaining to human terrain. They also operate alongside a wide range of other assets and agencies to collect information and advise on tasking. These include:

- dedicated intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, such as human intelligence teams;
- exploitation facilities;
- biometric enrolment programmes; and
- other sources such as routine patrol reports.

c. **Processing.** Cultural specialists provide important subject-matter expertise to assist intelligence analysts to conduct human terrain analysis. They are also especially useful in presenting a perspective as seen through the eyes of the population. Human terrain analysis is conducted using a number of techniques, including those specifically developed to analyse social, political and economic organisations, beliefs and values and interactions of people within the area of operation, Annex 3B gives examples of these. Intelligence and targeting databases and processing applications must be able to store, and process, human terrain information and intelligence alongside other operational material.

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d. **Dissemination.** While responsibility for disseminating the exhaustive intelligence assessment lies with the J2 cell, cultural specialists will likely be asked to assist with providing or delivering any specific human terrain content. They may also be asked to identify additional customers who should be included in its distribution.

317. There is a reciprocal relationship between the J2 and cultural specialists, which helps specialists plan and conduct their activity. Cultural specialists require analysed, fused intelligence on aspects relating to the human terrain. This may be intelligence on a key local leader or relate to the dynamics of the local agricultural cycle. Thus, cultural specialists will often raise intelligence requirements, as well as help answer them.

### Section 5 – Allies and partners

318. Most NATO nations have developed their own cultural capability, providing either deployed analysts and advice, or reachback support. For example, the US Army deploys human terrain teams (between five and nine people), comprising civilians and retired military personnel, to provide human terrain understanding to brigades or regional commanders. The US Marine Corps deploys their own cultural intelligence teams.

319. In Canada, the Department of Defence has worked with the Foreign Affairs Intelligence Requirements Department to ensure a high standard of cultural training for the military. The Netherlands has also developed human terrain analysts and Germany has a developed psychological operations capability that also provides cultural analysis and advice. NATO does not yet have its own culture doctrine, although a number of working groups are aiming to address this gap.

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Notes:

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## Annex 3A – Considering culture and human terrain in the operational estimate

3A1. The steps within the operational estimate are shown below. Each step requires the planner to include an assessment of the impact of culture and human terrain.<sup>1</sup>

3A2. **Step 1 – Understand the operating environment.** This is intelligence driven, but the cultural specialist will play a key role in providing cultural expertise to assist analysing the human terrain. The specialist will also make sure that culture and human terrain are integrated with other factors such as the adversary and the operating environment.

3A3. **Step 2 – Understand the problem.**

- a. **Mission analysis.** Mission analysis focuses the commander on his end-state and mission, higher intent, specified and implied tasks, freedoms and constraints. The cultural input will generate implied tasks and may identify constraints.
- b. **Evaluate objects and factors.** Drawing on the mission analysis, key objects and factors are evaluated. This will consider how they relate to the human terrain and potential consequences.
- c. **Understand the problem (commander's confirmation).** Key deductions are reviewed; objectives and end-states are confirmed. The commander will devise his campaign theory of change.

3A4. **Step 3 – Formulate potential courses of action.** In this step, how the human terrain might impact on proposed courses of action is considered. This includes how third party actors can be used to achieve our desired effects.<sup>2</sup>

3A5. **Step 4 – Develop and validate courses of action.** The significance of human terrain mapping increases as potential courses of action are

<sup>1</sup> Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 5-00, [Campaign Planning](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, change 2, Chapter 2, Section 4.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of third party actors include landowners, tribal elders or former regime figures who have moved out of the area (and who are no longer active participants in the conflict) but who still wield influence from afar.



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developed and detail is added to the decision support overlay and corresponding synchronisation matrix.

3A6. **Step 5 – Evaluate courses of action.** Evaluating a course of action will vary depending on the situation. The plan should now have fully incorporated cultural and human terrain factors. In the same way that the adversary's intent and likely reactions are considered, so must those of the population.

3A7. **Step 6 – Commander's decision.** Once a commander has made his decision, the selected course of action is developed into an operational plan.

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## Annex 3B – Human terrain analysis

‘Culture not only defines how a group sees itself; it also shapes how others see the group.’

Berkowitz and Goodman<sup>1</sup>

3B1. Although understanding the human terrain has much in common with understanding adversaries and other actors in general, non-specialists need to examine the environment in depth and identify knowledge gaps. They will then be able to produce as exhaustive an assessment as possible. There are a number of tools that can assist with human terrain analysis, and several visual aids can be used to display the results.<sup>2</sup> The list below is not exhaustive. Other government departments also undertake societal analysis and may have other tools we can use.

### Tools and methods

3B2. **Political-economic analysis.** Political-economic analysis examines how politics and economics interact. It identifies who has power, what drives political behaviour and how wealth is distributed. It can focus on sectors or programmes, such as a road-building programme, or specific problems such as illicit drug trafficking or corruption.

3B3. **Strategic-conflict assessment.** Strategic-conflict assessments often form the basis of cross-government planning for areas in conflict. These assessments map drivers of conflict, review current activity and identify future policy and programme options. This analysis also predicts the impact on existing objectives and interventions and how programmes or policies can unintentionally exacerbate the conflict.

3B4. **Country-governance analysis.** This examines the quality of governance by assessing the capability, accountability and responsiveness of governmental systems.

<sup>1</sup> Berkowitz and Goodman, *Best Truth: Intelligence in the Information Age*, page 148.

<sup>2</sup> Further advice on analytical tools is available from the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (DCSU) or Defence Intelligence.

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3B5. **Social exclusion and gender analysis.** Social exclusion and gender analysis explores the relationship between people and formal or informal institutions. It focuses on understanding how particular groups are excluded from society or the state. Such discrimination can often be a driver of conflict.

3B6. **Human rights assessments.** Assessing, monitoring and reporting on human rights are fundamental to protecting the population in conflict areas. For military personnel, human rights assessments provide an understanding on the perpetration of conflict and the impact on particular groups. They also assess the impact of violence on the population and civilian protection capacities.

3B7. **Interviews.** One of the best ways to gather information about issues that are important to a community is to spend time talking with representatives of that community. Cultural specialists have found that meeting with elders, other leaders or locals in general, produces information about influential themes and may identify individuals of interest. Ideally, interviewers should have two or three topics to discuss. These should be based on the commander's intelligence requirements, rather than being random. Open-ended interviews work best, in which a broad question is posed and the local leader is given time to talk around the topic, with follow-up questions asked if necessary. Treating the interview as an informal discussion is likely to help put the local person at ease and produce better results.

3B8. **Human terrain mapping.** The key individuals and groups in an area of operations can be represented graphically in a human terrain map. Intended effects can then be overlaid on individuals and groups, just as a geographic decision support overlay is overlaid onto a conventional map to identify named areas of interest.

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### Conflict analysis

The raw material for conflict exists in every group in every place. Tensions between different religious, ethnic, political or tribal groups have, however, often been managed without violence for hundreds of years. People rarely fight one another just because they believe different things or act in different ways. We should not ask, “how do we fix the underlying tensions”; instead we should ask ourselves, “what caused people to take violent action?”.

When answering this question, we should remember:

- there is rarely just one cause for social unrest or violence;
- the reasons people give to explain violence may not be accurate, either because it is difficult for them to objectively analyse their own situation, or they may be trying to give a certain picture; and
- people are unlikely to resort to violence unless they feel that all other options have gone, or they have been led to violence.

3B9. **Basics.** With societies being so large and amorphous, it can be difficult to know where to begin human terrain analysis. Taking into account the basic considerations below is a good start point.

### Key human terrain considerations

#### Interaction

- What are the group’s languages and when/where are they used?
- Is the group sensitive about particular parts of the body?
- Where do people get their information from?
- Which information sources do people trust and distrust?
- What is seen as good manners?
- With whom, where and when do people socialise?
- Are there any foods people can’t eat, and when?

#### Social organisation

- What are the main groups that influence attitudes and behaviour?
- Which behaviours and beliefs are expected by these groups?

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**Social organisation (continued)**

- What makes a person a member of the group?
- Who counts as a relative and what does it mean to be related?
- What are the roles of men and women?

**Political organisation**

- Who has power and influence?
- What gives a person power, authority or status?
- How are decisions made locally and by the government?
- What are the main political institutions?
- What do people think of the local and national government?
- What is the role of the military and the police?
- What do people think of the police and army?
- How do people deal with local disagreements?

**Economic organisation**

- What is valued?
- Which groups have most and least land/property/wealth?
- What counts as corruption, and what levels are acceptable?
- What are the main forms of income generation?
- How does trade occur?
- Who does what work?
- Do individuals or groups own land? How is land rented or used by other people?

**Beliefs and values**

- What is the group's religion?
- What do people believe, and do, as part of their religion?
- What are the group's religious events and rituals?
- What are the key formative events in the group's history?
- What are the group's attitudes to time?
- What are the key dates (religious, political, military and so on)?
- What is considered honourable behaviour?

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3B10. **ASCOPE and PMESII.** Although labour intensive, the framework produced by comparing ASCOPE (area, structure, capabilities, organisation, people and events) with PMESII (political, military, economic, socio-cultural, infrastructure and information) criteria, can be used to collate existing information and highlight information and intelligence gaps. The results will inform the drafting of subsequent intelligence requirements. However, the ASCOPE/PMESII grid is not a simple box-ticking exercise. If you use it in such a manner, it will produce flawed results. Figure 3B.1 gives an example of an ASCOPE/PMESII grid.



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	<b>Political</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Information</b>
<b>Areas</b>	District/ provincial boundaries, government	Coalition or security forces bases, historic ambushes, IED sites, insurgent bases	Bazaars, farming, livestock, dealers, smuggling	Shuras, meeting areas, picnic areas	Irrigation network, water tables, medicine	Radio, TV newspapers, graffiti, posters, word-of-mouth
<b>Structures</b>	District or provincial centre, shura halls, polling sites, court houses	District or provincial police headquarters	Bazaars, food stores, industrial capabilities	Mosques, wedding halls, restaurants, coffee houses	Roads, bridges, electrical lines, walls, dams, sluice gates	Mobile telephones /radio/television towers, print shops
<b>Capabilities</b>	Dispute resolution by local leadership	Security force coverage 24/7, reaction forces available, insurgent activity	Access to banks, drought resilience, black market influence	Strength of tribal and village traditions, structures, mullahs	Ability to build and maintain roads, walls, checkpoints, irrigation and sewage	Literacy rates, availability of electronic media, phone services
<b>Organisations</b>	Political parties, insurgent groups, courts systems	Coalition and security force presence, insurgent groups present, linkages and networks	Banks, large-scale land ownership, economic non- governmental organisations, major illicit industries	Tribes, clans, families, shuras, youth shuras, women's representation	Government construction	News organisations, influential mosques, media activities

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JDP 04, Understanding and Decision-making (2nd Edition) and  
JDP 07, Defence Engagement  
published by Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC)**

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Specialist cultural capability

	<b>Political</b>	<b>Military</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Socio-cultural</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Information</b>
<b>People</b>	Governors, councils, shura members, judges, prosecutors	Coalition, security force insurgent leadership	Bankers, landowners, merchants, lenders, illegal facilitators	Mullahs, elders, shura members, influential families	Builders, road contactors, local development councils, unemployed groups	Media owners, informal leaders
<b>Events</b>	Elections, shuras, judges, provincial council meetings	Lethal events, deaths, injuries, loss of leadership	Drought, harvest, business openings, loss of businesses	Daily or Friday prayers, holidays, weddings, deaths, funerals, births	Road and bridge construction, well digging, school construction	Daily or Friday prayers, publishing dates, project openings

**Figure 3B.1 – An example of an ASCOPE/PMESII grid**

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3B11. **Their world, their perspective.** Understanding the human terrain requires us to look at the world from the perspective of those who live there, rather than from our point of view. This is why it is essential that you avoid only categorising people/groups as *red*, *white*, *green* or *blue*, or as part of *official*, *traditional*, *dark* or *shadow* states, as these categories largely indicate how we think the person is positioned in relationship to us, rather than how their community see them. You can enhance your understanding by visualising the groups of which someone is a member, using a 'petal' diagram. Figure 3B.2 shows an example of a petal diagram. Such an illustration, emphasises that an individual belongs to multiple groups, each of which will influence what they believe in and how they may behave at different times.

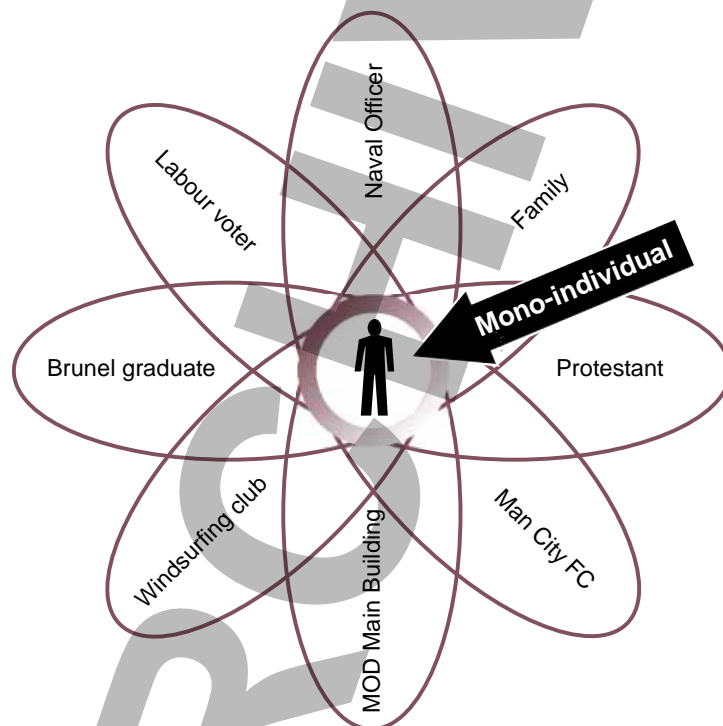


Figure 3B.2 – An example of a 'petal' diagram

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3B12. **Association chart.** Computer software can assist with analysis and produce diagrams showing associations between people, objects and places. These association charts can be as effective in human terrain analysis, as well as displaying adversary networks. Figure 3B.3 is an example of an association chart.

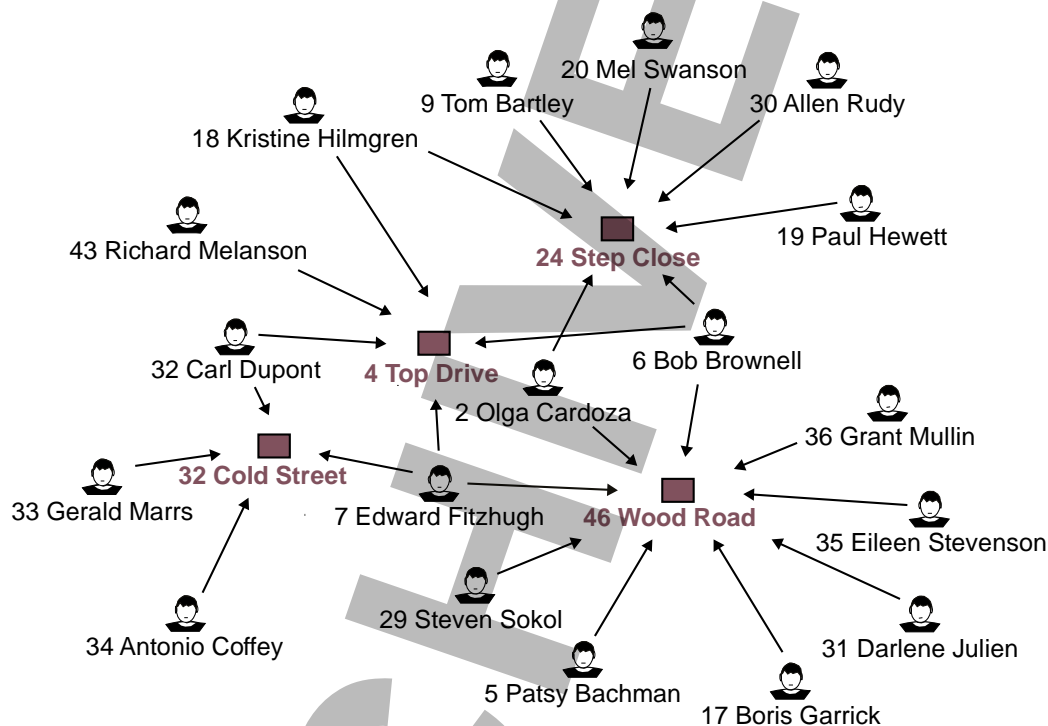
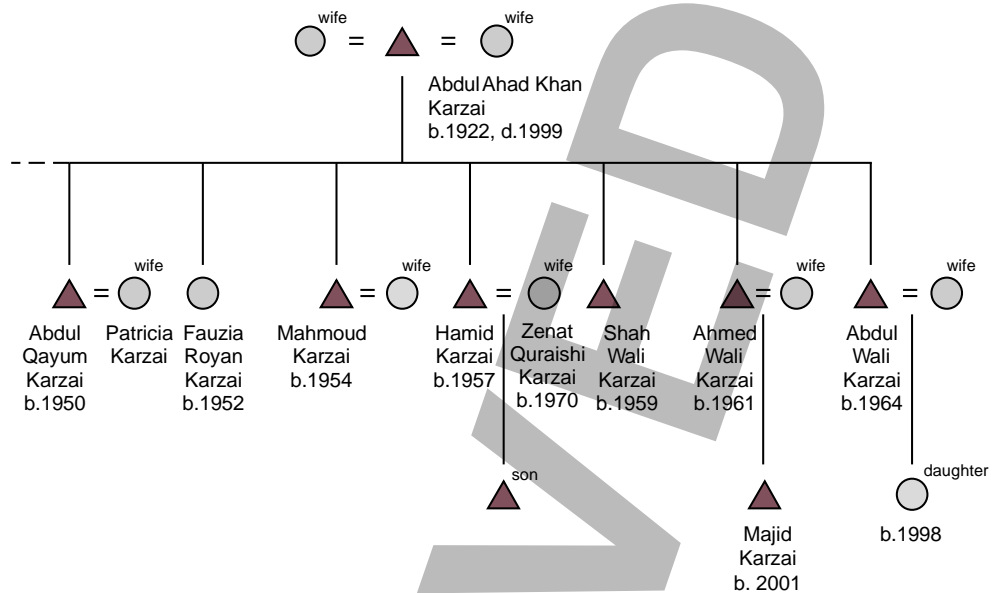


Figure 3B.3 – An example of a computer-generated association chart

3B13. **Kinship diagrams.** While association charts provide details of links between people and objects, they are not ideal for illustrating the complex relationships within families. For example, it is often important to know the birth order of brothers, as the eldest tends to have most influence, or how a man is related to another man through marriage, as it will affect their relative status. 'Kinship' diagrams are simply family trees, using set conventions to represent people and their relationships. They can be a very useful way of collating information from multiple sources to enable analysis of the dynamics within a group. Figure 3B.4 provides an example of a kinship diagram being built. It shows that, whilst some information is available, there are gaps of information which will need to be completed in time to see the whole picture.

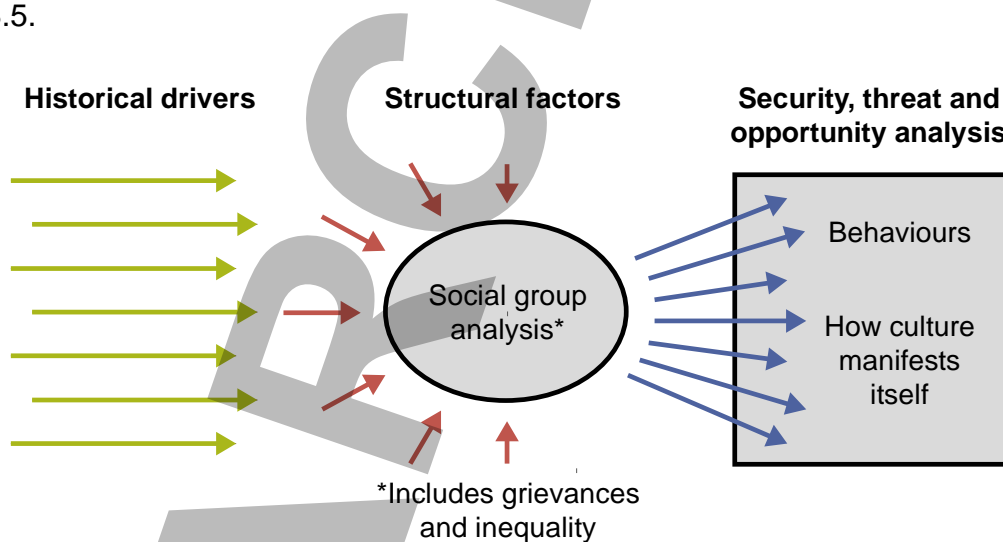
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**Figure 3B.4 – An example of an incomplete kinship diagram**

**3B14. Analysing drivers.** Once sufficient human terrain data has been collected, it is possible to examine what motivates a group to behave as it does. In a conflict situation, it is important to understand a group’s grievances (what has led them to fight). The history behind the conflict, the wider security environment, and the threats and opportunities for each group in a particular situation can also be displayed pictorially, as shown in Figure 3B.5.



**Figure 3B.5 – ‘Drivers’ analysis**

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Lexicon

## Lexicon

### Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations

ASCOPE	Area, structure, capabilities, organisation, people and events
DCDC	Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre
DCSU	Defence Cultural Specialist Unit
DFID	Department for International Development
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JDP	Joint Doctrine Publication
JDN	Joint Doctrine Note
JIPOE	Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PMESII	Political, military, economic, socio-cultural, infrastructure and information
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States



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Lexicon

## Part 2 – Terms and definitions

This section is divided into three areas. First, we list terms and their descriptions that we use as reference for this publication only. We then list proposed new definitions that will be added to the UK Terminology Database. We finish by listing endorsed terms and their definitions (source in brackets) which may be helpful to the reader.

A fuller reference to extant terminology is provided by Allied Administrative Publication-06 (AAP-06), *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions* and Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-01.1, *The UK Supplement to the NATO Terminology Database*.

### Terms used for reference in this publication only

#### **belief system**

The way in which a culture collectively constructs a model or framework for how it thinks about something. A religion is a particular kind of belief system. Other examples of general forms of belief systems are ideologies, paradigms.

#### **corruption**

In the context of leadership, abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

#### **culture**

The customs, ideas and social behaviour of a particular people or group. (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

#### **cultural norms**

Behaviour patterns that are typical of specific groups, which have distinct identities, based on culture, language, ethnicity or race separating them from other groups.

#### **cultural sensitivity**

A necessary component of cultural competence, meaning that we make an effort to be aware of the potential and actual cultural factors that affect our interactions with others.

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**diaspora**

People who have spread, or been dispersed from their homeland.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**discrimination**

The action of discriminating against people. Recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**diversity**

The understanding that each individual is unique, and recognising individual differences along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

**ethnic**

Relating to a group of people having a common national or cultural tradition.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**ethnic minority**

A subgroup within a community which differs from the main population.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**expatriate**

A person who lives outside their native country.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**human rights**

A right which is believed to belong justifiably to every person.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**integration**

The bringing of people of different racial or ethnic groups into unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organisation; desegregation. An individual integrates when they become a part of the existing society.

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**nation**

A large body of people united by common descent, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.

(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12th edition)

**national culture**

Cultural experiences, beliefs, learned behavior patterns, and values relating to, or characteristic of a nation.

**race**

Each of the major divisions of humankind, having distinct physical characteristics. (Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12th edition)

**racism**

The belief that each race or ethnic group possesses specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities that distinguish it as inferior or superior to another such group. Also relating to discrimination against or antagonism towards other races or ethnic groups based on such a belief.

(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12th edition)

**reciprocity**

The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit.

(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**ritual**

A series of actions habitually and invariably followed by someone.

(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12th edition)

**subculture**

A cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture.

(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**wealth**

A person's material assets, including income, land, and other types of property. It is the basis of economic and often social status.

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**xenophobia**

Intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.  
(Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 12<sup>th</sup> edition)

**Proposed new definitions**

**cultural capability**

Using military cultural specialists to aid understanding. (JDN 4/13)

**human terrain**

Characterising cultural, anthropological, and ethnographic information about the human population and interactions within the joint operations area.  
(JDN 4/13)

**Endorsed definitions**

**cultural awareness**

An awareness of the current and historic values, norms and beliefs reflected in different social structures and systems and in particular, how they contribute to an actor's motives, intents and behaviours. (JDP 2-00)

**human intelligence (HUMINT)**

A category of intelligence derived from information provided by, or collected on, human sources and individuals of intelligence interest, as well as systematic and controlled exploitation, by interaction with, or surveillance of, those sources or individuals. (JDP 0-01.1)

**intelligence**

The directed and co-ordinated acquisition and analysis of information to assess capabilities, intent and opportunities for exploitation by leaders at all levels. (JDP 2-00, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

**intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR)**

The activities that synchronises and integrates the planning and operation of collection capabilities, including the processing and dissemination of the resulting product. (JDP 2-00, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

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**intelligence requirement**

A requirement for assessed information about any aspect of a situation needed to develop a commander's understanding. (JDP 2-00, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

**horizon scanning**

In intelligence usage, horizon scanning is the systematic search across the global environment for potential threats, hazards and opportunities. (JDP 04)

**joint action**

The deliberate use and orchestration of military capabilities and activities to realise effects on other actors' will, understanding and capability, and the cohesion between them to achieve influence. (JDP 01, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

**joint operational environment**

The overall space, conditions and surroundings within which military forces operate. (JDP 2-00, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

**psychological operations**

Planned activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives. (AAP-06, 2013 edition)

**situational awareness**

In intelligence usage, situational awareness is the ability to identify trends and linkages over time, and to relate these to what is happening and what is not happening. (JDP 04)

**target audience**

An individual or group selected for influence or attack by means of psychological operations. (AAP-06, 2013 edition)

**understanding**

In the military context, understanding is the perception and interpretation of a particular situation in order to provide the context, insight and foresight required for effective decision-making. (JDP 04)