



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND DEFENCE POLICY

POLICY BRIEF
SPRING 2015

Queen's University



Partnering and Army Doctrine: Indicators of Military Cultural Interoperability

Colonel Thomas A. Crowson
Visiting Defence Fellow
United States Army

Like most Western armies, the United States Army is facing historic budget cuts. Over the next three years, the Army is expected to cut between 120,000 and 140,000 soldiers from its wartime high of 570,000. Yet the threat has not gone away. Increasing tensions and troop deployments to the Baltics, Ukraine, West Africa and the Middle East all underscore the potential need for boots on the ground. After thirteen years of sustained combat, the US Army, with 490,000 soldiers is finding itself spread thin, tired, and in need of a plan for the upcoming decades. The answer to the problem is a renewed focus on partnering with forces of other nations since the United States will not be in a position to go it alone.

Partnering is not a new concept. The United States Army has operated with partner Armies in virtually every conflict since World War I. Commonwealth Armies have a doctrinal expectation to fight as part of a partner force. European Armies have taken it to new levels with multinational units such as the German/Dutch Corps, the Integrated German/ Polish Battalion, or the BALTBAT integrated battalion of Baltic States.

However, the renewed focus on partnering by the United States Army has exposed a gap in its doctrine. There is no doctrinal consideration of cultural interoperability. Through many unit and army level ad-hoc processes and repurposing of existing systems, the Army has become accustomed to analyzing the culture of other nations. However, a single methodology was never formalized which has translated into learning by doing when it comes to cultural interoperability.

To bridge the gap, one can draw on academic theory and military doctrine to develop indicators of cultural interoperability. These indicators of military cultural interoperability are societal narrative, inclusion, power and authority, and catalysts. By providing a common starting point for analysis of partner armies these indicators allow leaders to reflect on the requirements for working with partner nations and develop training programs tailored to promote strong friendships.

The components of societal narrative—history, connections, enmity, and support—provide a foundation for understanding national objectives, caveats, and the boundaries of the partnership. Inclusion combines diversity with prejudice to determine the level of acceptance for others.



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND DEFENCE POLICY

POLICY BRIEF
SPRING 2015

Queen's University

Indicators of Military Cultural Interoperability	
Societal Narrative	
How do the soldiers of the army view themselves?	<u>Components</u>
	History
	Connections
	Support
	Enmity
Inclusion	
What is the level of acceptance for diversity in the army?	<u>Components</u>
	Prejudice
	Diversity
Power and Authority	
What factors influence the formal chain of command and how do leaders come into power?	<u>Components</u>
	Allegiance
	Accession
	Command
Catalysts	
How do leaders of the army develop the next generation of leaders, prepare for the future, and promote positive change?	<u>Components</u>
	Technology
	Education
	Interaction
	Jointness

Power and authority explores accessions, allegiance, and command to determine the structure of the army along political and cultural lines and define the formal and informal power structures that form the organization's practical workings. Cultural catalysts focus on the future of a military by determining the emphasis on civilian and professional military education, use of technology, participation in international military exercises and professional education, and participation in domestic inter-organizational exercises. Together, the indicators chart the potential for cultural interoperability between armed forces of two nations.

A framework for cultural interoperability analysis could have had significant impact at the onset of the partnering effort with Iraqi forces. By reducing the ad-hoc and redundant efforts at cultural analysis by individual units within the U.S. Army, all levels of command would have had an understanding of expectations, saving significant time and organizational energy by consolidating research and training efforts and dividing responsibilities to prevent redundant efforts. The time required to determine what was important, where to get the information, and how to train would have been significantly reduced, resulting in clear efficiency gains. Information sharing, lessons learned, and collection goals between units and headquarters staffs would be facilitated with a collective understanding of what cultural information would be critical for current and future operations. Ultimately, frustration and disgruntlement could have been reduced as soldiers and leaders, armed with a greater cultural understanding, were able to better manage personal and organizational expectations and influence Iraqi military culture during their deployment.

The old planning adage of "see yourself, see your enemy, see the terrain" is no longer enough. Operations with partner forces dictate that the notion of "see your friends" must be at the forefront of any planning effort. To drive partnering to the forefront of Army doctrine, we must have systems in place that truly address its intricacies. The indicators of cultural interoperability fill that void and provide a starting point for future analysis.