

S U M M A R Y

Cross-Cultural Awareness. From Militarization of Anthropology to Anthropologization of the Military

Making war upon rebellion is messy and slow, like eating soup with a knife.

Thomas E. Lawrence¹

To say that September 11, 2001 shook the modern world and not only created a new direction in American foreign policy and security strategy, but also introduced changes in the field of international relations would be a cliché. The impact of this event has been multidimensional and resulted in large-scale engagement of several dozen countries worldwide in the definition of their respective positions toward New York's unprecedented tragedy. After the attack, the 'clash of civilizations' concept gained a new, clearcut meaning and, according to many, it is taking place right now. At the same time, it has been found that the West addressed a new type of conflict in a conventional manner, well-known after almost fifty years of two-sided Cold War competition, as well as earlier European history. Meanwhile, the new, 21st century 'clash of civilizations' requires an understanding of what civilizations actually consist in, what unites and divides them, and what helps them endure. At the beginning, however, the cultural factor was not even taken into account by the political elites. It seemed that Iraq and Afghanistan could be treated conventionally, making use of the overwhelming technological, operational and tactical advantage, as well as superiority in numbers. Most of the measures taken so far have failed, however. Experience has shown that dispersed groups of poorly armed fighters trained in 'insurgency' conditions have been gathering strength following the initial disorganization and inflicting significant damage on the Western forces, drawing on the support of local communities, among other factors. Waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan soon reminded everyone of the

¹ Thomas Lawrence's motto cited by John A. Nagl in his book entitled *Learning to Eat Soup With a Knife. Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2002.

prominent words by Thomas Lawrence – it became as tedious, complicated and prolonged as eating soup with a knife.

The need to change the methodology in Iraq and Afghanistan made it necessary to look into the domains whose involvement in modern military operations had been scarce to date: the humanities and social sciences, with a special focus on cultural anthropology and sociology. The training system was then reshaped with these science fields in mind across the world's armed forces – a trend initiated by the U.S. The new cross-cultural awareness concept (CCA) was to open the path to success in operations undertaken by the West in Central Asia and the Middle East.

The acknowledgment of the fact that Afghanistan might become 'the second Vietnam' was accompanied by the work on counterinsurgency warfare manuals, research in the complexity of social interrelations, tribal networks and values professed by various ethnic groups. It was also decided that anthropologists specializing in the region should be employed within the military and sent to assist in field operations. The launch of the Human Terrain System started a heated debate among social researchers on whether cooperating with the army is ethical. The question of providing information concerning the researched groups and the possibility of making use of such data by military commanders was strongly criticized alongside the issue of endangering the lives and health of anthropologists taking part in the process. Professional accountability principles were put on the table and claimed to be broken or increasingly blurred. As a result, many works have been published to counter the ethics, legitimacy and effectiveness of cooperation between social scientists and the military. At the same time, many articles have praised the new military operations paradigm, i.e. cross-cultural awareness as the key to success.

Increased interest in the issue can also be observed in Poland. This is due to the fact that it is impossible to effectively influence the development of a secure environment without establishing good relations with the local community and therefore some basic knowledge concerning its culture, as the experience of the Polish troops has shown. During his interview with "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna" on October 20, 2009, the then chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, General Franciszek Gągor said: "The Afghans treated ISAF as intruders due to cultural and behavioral differences, as well as lack of trust on their part symbolized by armored vehicles patrolling Afghan villages."

So far, there has been no work presenting a comprehensive description of this complex and interdisciplinary issue that would take into account the question of winning and opening military structures to cultural issues within the field of political science. The implications of the observed cultural turn for the country in question and for contemporary international relations have not been raised either. This gap is visible both in Polish and foreign scientific literature despite the existence of a large number of works partially dealing with the issue, especially in languages other than Polish. In Poland, this has only recently emerged as a research subject. The aim of this dissertation is to fill that

gap and present the features of the cultural turn in international relations, taking as an example the concept of cross-cultural awareness in multinational military operations. The term 'cultural turn' is understood as an 'inflated' need for knowledge concerning human cultural diversity and its impact on relations between individuals, countries, cultures and civilizations, as well as the tendency to put a greater emphasis on the cultural factor in international relations research.

The concept of cross-cultural awareness presented here may be used as a new analytical and research tool adopted from social science and the humanities by military science. This approach has been growing in attractiveness in view of the radical changes taking place in international relations as a whole. To provide a reliable analysis of these changes, we must look at the cultural factor as a new approach adopted by political science e.g. in the course of post-colonial studies, *via* armed conflict anthropology, cross-cultural communication or international cultural relations. The 'anthropologization' of the contemporary discourse concerning international relations is illustrated in the dissertation with the use of the cultural turn concept, alluding to the shift experienced in the most brutal domain of these relations: war, conflict and military operations – all paid with human life. Precisely, this domain takes the form of a lens focusing such questions as the degree to which the cultural turn contributes to a permanent change in the nature of international relations. Although several components of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have already been withdrawn from Afghanistan, it is beyond doubt that the lengthy-by-all-means lesson will make the decision-making process concerning participation in foreign military operations (regardless of whether it is Afghanistan, Libya, Chad, Congo or Bosnia and Herzegovina) take into account the knowledge provided by cross-cultural awareness providers, i.e. anthropologists, sociologists, cross-cultural psychologists, linguists and religious researchers.

The direct impulse for taking this issue as the subject of my scientific research came with my participation in Multi-National Experiment 6 in 2009–2010 to which I was invited by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and by the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces. The aim of the project was to establish the concept of cross-cultural awareness in NATO allied operations. The possibility of confronting the vast literature on the subject with the process of multi-national experimentation in practical terms, and consultations with international military and scientific circles have influenced the final shape and content of this dissertation. At the same time, the outcome went far beyond the experiment itself, illustrating the issue in contexts omitted or merely hinted by it.

This dissertation was written with three distinct categories of recipients in mind: international relations (IR) researchers looking for additional answers to IR dynamics in culture, anthropologists taking part in the discussions concerning their role in shaping foreign affairs policies and international

relations, as well as military representatives interested in culture and its impact on the effectiveness of the undertaken operations within the realm of various types of difficult military operations. Although some parts of this dissertation may seem interesting for each of these groups, this does not imply that they will find here a set of fully satisfactory theses and statements or answers to all their questions or doubts related to the use of culture as a tool in contemporary international relations (regardless of the intentions accompanying this 'use'). During my discussions with the representatives of all the three groups of recipients with respect to particular fragments of this dissertation, I understood that taking up this subject is equivalent to stumbling into a morass in scientific terms, the morass being culture when politicized, militarized or operationalized in different fields of today's international and cross-cultural relations. I was able to confront the civil and military views on the subject thanks to my participation in numerous conferences and workshops organized in Poland and abroad, meetings with soldiers during vocational training courses for officers at the National Defense Academy of Warsaw, courses organized by the Military Training Center for Peace Support Operations in Kielce (currently Center for the Preparation for Foreign Missions) and sessions for the participants of post-graduate 'Cross-Cultural Communication in the field of International Security' studies organized in cooperation with the University of Warsaw (International Relations Institute of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science) and the National Defense Academy (Management and Command Department) in 2011. At the same time, I was deeply convinced that the controversy of the issue makes it the more in need of an interdisciplinary approach (although marked by many obstacles) and an attempt at expanding the topics for discussion is imperative especially in Poland. As a result, I decided not to 'wave the white flag' and continue my research on the subject. The outcome of my efforts can be evaluated by the Reader alone.

The goal of Chapter I entitled *Cultural Turn in International Relations* is to present the problems related to defining culture and the cultural turn in the context of international relations and to point to the implications and challenges coming from the introduction of a cultural perspective into IR research. In the subsequent parts of the chapter, the heralds of cultural turn are considered based on IR theories forecasting the return of culture into this field of study.

A review of the discussed issues leads to the conclusion that, throughout the chapter, the term 'cultural turn' is treated as a determinant and background of the changes in the way contemporary military conflicts and military operations are perceived, especially in the case of multinational initiatives. The rise of the cross-cultural awareness concept was possible precisely because such a cultural turn took place.

Chapter II presents *the cultural turn in the modern military*. Using the term 'cultural turn', as defined in Chapter I, I try to determine the way in which it may be applied in an attempt at grasping the changes today's armed forces are

undergoing. Such changes are obviously multi-directional and multi-dimensional, but the main focus of the chapter is to determine the point at which the impact of culture on the functioning of the military was first noticed, as well as persons who became the architects of the cultural turn in this environment. The chapter is also aimed at determining the practical aspects of the observed cultural turn in the field.

Chapter III discusses *the concept of cross-cultural awareness in multinational armed forces operations*. The subject is presented in the light of works on cross-cultural awareness undertaken as part of the Multi-National Experiment (MNE) initiated by the United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM). MNE 6 encompassed 22 countries and NATO. The European Union and the United Nations, as well as other international organizations were invited as observers. 11 objectives were implemented as part of MNE 6, including objective 4.3.: 'develop an improved ability for coalition forces and partners to promote cross-cultural awareness of the operational environment in order to contribute to a shared situational understanding'. The research problem of MNE 6 was related to the ability of coalition forces to generate joint situational awareness by establishing procedures and mechanisms for information exchange, efforts synchronization and achieving operational progress in cooperation with international organizations and other players of the operational environment, by fighting irregular threats and other non-cooperating entities. The chapter presents the main assumptions, structure and results of the experiment. It is concluded by considerations related to the possibility of implementing cross-cultural awareness in the educational and training systems of the Polish Armed Forces. The principal aim here is to answer the question of whether the knowledge of culture alone suggests ready-made solutions for practical implementation within the armed forces. What else is needed to ensure the effectiveness, or 'operationalization' of this knowledge?

Chapter IV, entitled *Military organization culture – the foundations of cross-cultural awareness in multinational armed forces*, indicates that cross-cultural awareness is not concerned solely with the relations with local inhabitants. The internal cultural diversity of the coalition/allied forces, which often inhibits the effectiveness of military operations (to be blamed on multinational contingents), is equally important. For this reason, the dissertation also discusses the organizational culture of the armed forces, its national variants and influence on civil and military cooperation. Touching upon the issue of military culture required that the results of comparative studies conducted by Dutch researchers (e.g. Joseph Soeters) be presented to investigate the impact of cultural diversity within multinational armed forces on joint operations conducted in unrest or armed conflict areas.

The aim of the chapter was to describe the organizational culture of the armed forces at the national and international levels and compare it with civil organizational structures to assess its influence on the effectiveness of

multinational operations, i.e. operations conducted by civil-military forces from more than two countries.

Chapter V ponders *the relation between the militarization of anthropology and 'counter-counterinsurgency' anthropology*, focusing on the acquisition of cultural knowledge by the state and the armed forces. The chapter presents the main points of dispute over the Human Terrain System. In this context, various types of tension concerning the roles to be adopted by the anthropologist are discussed: the role of an objective researcher, representative of his/her own culture, representative of a specific profession/professional organization culture, e.g. an anthropological society etc. Anthropology, as a science designed for leading the discourse on the cultural diversity of human beings, shaped by the 'fieldwork fetish', is discussed in terms of influence it exerts on the foreign policies adopted by countries and, consequently, on international relations. This influence is illustrated by the U.S. policy toward Japan and Vietnam.

Chapter VI, entitled *Anthropologization of the military and military operations*, discusses the concept of 'winning the hearts and minds' and population-centric operations. The above terms are presented in the context of the refreshed scheme of counterinsurgency operations (COIN). Instead of focusing on the opponent, such actions concentrate on local inhabitants whose support for one or the other side of the conflict largely affects the outcome of the operation. The knowledge and respect of, as well as abiding by the cultural background, values, customs and traditions governing the behavior of local communities are therefore central to the armed forces fighting the insurgents and play an important part in the COIN strategy. The chapter also presents the interrelations between the concept of cross-cultural awareness, COIN operations and the concept of 'winning the hearts and minds', based on the example of Iraq and Afghanistan operations.

Final considerations provide a summary of the dissertation and constitute an attempt at answering the following questions: 1) How does the West cope with the idea of equality of cultures in a culturally diverse world?; 2) What is the future of the cultural turn?; 3) Is the concept of cross-cultural awareness appropriate and sufficient to solve the problems faced by multinational armed forces today?; 4) Can the concept of cross-cultural awareness serve as a golden mean between the 'culture-fobia' of the past and the 'culture-centrism' of the present?

Cross-cultural awareness was analyzed with an interdisciplinary approach, which made it possible to combine various research methods typical of social sciences and the humanities, including political science and international relations, studies on security, defense as well as ethnology. The primary goal of this dissertation was to provide a comprehensive, holistic view of the complexity of cross-cultural awareness bordering on the domains of each of these sciences.

Naturally, cross-cultural awareness functions as a correlate of other, well-established terms and concepts, such as national culture, strategic culture,

military culture, security culture, cultural security and cross-cultural education, cross-cultural competence, cross-cultural dialogue or cultural heritage. The concept of cross-cultural awareness is therefore a phenomenon concerned with a series of different scientific disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, political science, pedagogy, security studies, strategic studies, international relations, cross-cultural psychology, international law etc.

I tried to provide an impartial (if possible) presentation of the dilemmas and challenges posed by the return of culture into international relations at various levels: intergovernmental, interorganizational and interindividual. In view of the cultural turn encountered in this field, I decided to analyze various viewpoints on the matter presented by political scientists, politicians, social scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, cross-cultural psychologists, military theorists and practitioners. The adopted holistic approach to cross-cultural awareness reflects my conviction that only an interdisciplinary study can be effective in this case, however difficult to conduct. Such a study should form part of a larger and more in-depth research project and I hope that this dissertation will encourage other researchers to take up the subject or continue theoretical and practical activity in this area.

Thus, before we start reading a book, it is worth asking ourselves how much depends on the cultural factor. The answer, as it seems, will depend on the person to which the question is addressed. It is highly probable that a soldier (even today) would say that not much, an anthropologist would insist that a lot while a political scientist or international relations specialist would say it depends. The latter view is the most familiar to me personally as it tries to look at the cultural sphere in the context of international relations where culture may be the deciding factor, as well as other areas in which it is of background importance. In view of the subject of the dissertation, cross-cultural awareness is naturally put in the foreground. It is, however, always accompanied by various considerations concerning pitfalls, challenges and threats deriving from its absolutization.

At the same time, it is to be hoped that the various points of view and diverging theoretical directions within the above-mentioned scientific fields have been successfully presented on the subsequent pages. As an outsider with respect to military science and an insider in the field of humanities, I decided to focus on the importance of the undertaken subject for the 'ordinary' participants of global international processes: soldiers who would never have decided to 'visit' Afghanistan if it were not for state decisions, and anthropologists who are currently being summoned to support military actions and often expected to be at least available on the 'anthropological hotline', if not engaged directly in the operations. This is due to the fact that the dynamics of today's international relations is very often shaped by those who were merely passive observers until recently. The cultural turn caused a radical change in their position.

International relations have been ‘culturalized’ and culture has been politicized. Politicized culture becomes an instrument used to exercise power, create and take control over identity-driven human aspirations. The militarization of culture is also clearly visible by now. With today’s army transformations and changes in alliance and coalition forming, culture is used for utilitarian purposes, i.e. to increase mission efficiency and the chances of defeating the enemy (and not understanding the Other). These two processes lead to a third phenomenon – the operationalization of culture by means of which culture becomes a tool, a 21st century weapon, deficient and adjusted to specific purposes. The above three processes produce parallel changes in the reactions to their very existence: the hitherto culture-free domains are culturalized or, to use a more legitimate term deriving from historical sources – anthropologized. Thus, we are dealing with the culturalization or anthropologization of the military as we see it today and of the policies undertaken by certain countries as a result of such a state of affairs.

Is there a differentiating factor between these processes? Probably not in the practical sense as both the politicization of culture and the anthropologization of politics are task-oriented. Nevertheless, culture can very well function on its own, without international relations. On the other hand, the latter cannot function without the former. Without culture, international relations are forced to present a fragmentary, ‘shredded’ vision of the world. Culture will function perfectly without the military. The same does not apply to the military. It will be functional of course, but it will be imperfect, handicapped, taken out of the dynamic social context both nationally and on foreign missions.

Both cases point to the only solution at hand: adopting the cultural approach. If not out of liking, at least out of common sense. Even such a relationship may result very fruitful, shaping cross-culturally aware politicians, scientists and soldiers, as well as other individuals living in a difficult, complicated but extremely interesting and culture-conscious world.

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