

OSS '02 Presentation, 8 May 2002

Respecting the Cultural Dimension: Intelligence and Africa

Theme: US policymakers are more likely to identify appropriate ends and select feasible ways in pursuing US interests in Africa if they have an appreciation for the African cultural environment. The success of long-term US military relationships and complex interventions in Africa particularly is dependent on a sophisticated appreciation of the unique cultural context. Americans tend to be very ethnocentric and obsessed with technological collection capabilities: they struggle to see social reality through the cultural filters of other societies. These tendencies can be serious liabilities in Africa.

Presentation Outline:

Introduction: Why Should We Care?

Basic Intelligence Questions: What Do We Want to Know About Them?

The Concept of Culture: An Essential Intelligence Tool

- Definitions
- Levels of analysis
- Culture, *paradigmata* and human options

The Obstacles of Our Own Cultural Models

Characteristics of the African Security Environment

- Urban versus Rural
- Low tech
- A multiplicity of actors
- Culturally peculiar expectations of leadership
- Weak impulse control
- Culturally unique basic orientations
- Role of the supernatural

So How Do We Cope?

Concluding Exhortation

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**The Cultural Dimension
Intelligence and Africa**



*Don Henk
US Air War College*

**Why
should
I
care?**



Machines don't fight wars. Terrain doesn't fight wars. Humans fight wars. You must get into the minds of the humans. That's where the battles are won.

Colonel John R. Boyd

Crisis Involvements




Support to Peace Operations



Humanitarian Relief

NEO

Since 1990: More US Military Interventions than on any other Continent

American Values are Challenged



Hemorrhagic Fevers (like Ebola)



Malaria



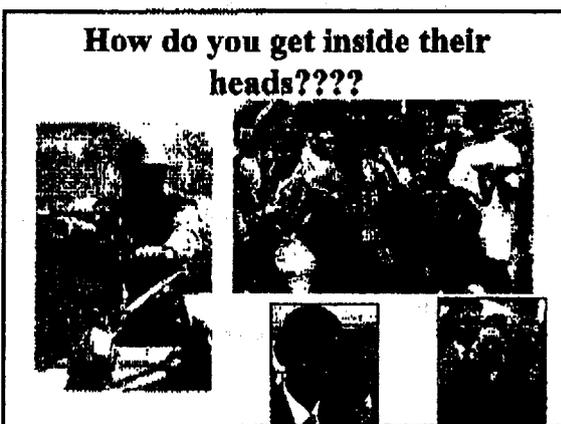
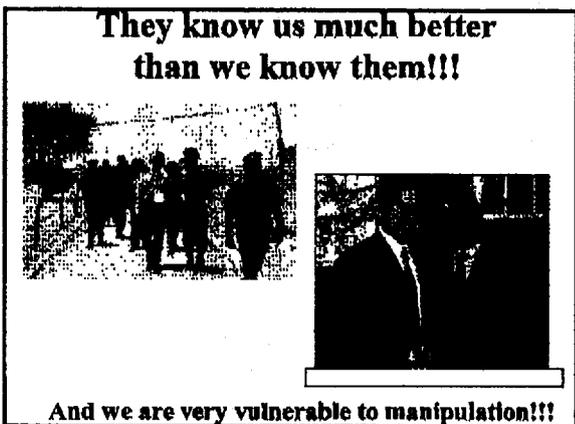
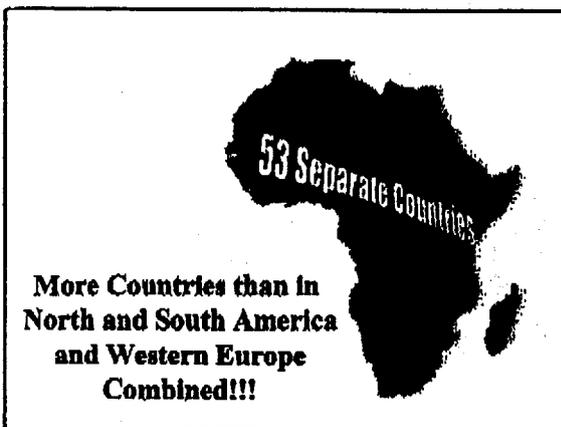
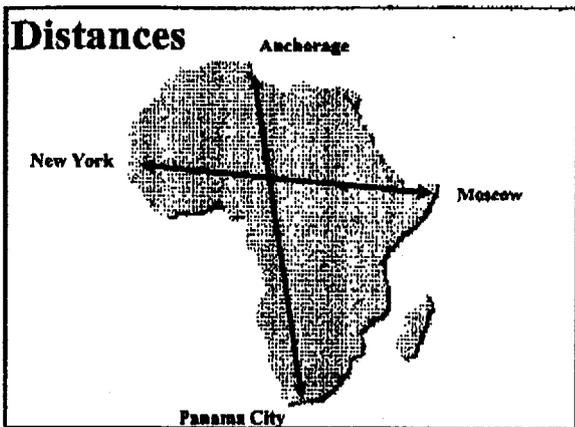
Famine and Starvation



HIV/AIDS

US Objectives in Africa 

- ⇒ Expand trade and investment, and promote sustainable growth, agriculture and development
- ⇒ Increase democracy, good governance and respect for the rule of law, and help strengthen society through education
- ⇒ Decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases
- ⇒ Increase African capacity to prevent, mitigate, and resolve crises, conflict and regional instability
- ⇒ Conserve Africa's environment



What Are We Interested in Knowing?

- Who are the leaders? What are the decision-making processes? How are decisions communicated and implemented?
- What are they planning to do? When? With what resources? With what likely effect?
- What are the organizations, organizational structures and characteristic *modus operandi*? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the local incentives to behavior we desire to encourage, disincentives to behavior we want to stop?
- Given the local cultural context, what kinds of approaches/strategies would be most effective for us?

AGENDA

- The Concept of Culture
- Our Own Cultural Models: An Obstacle
- Characteristics of the African Security Environment
- So How Do We Cope?

**Culture:
A Slippery Concept**



Whenever I hear the word "culture"... I release the safety catch on my pistol.
Hermann Goering (1893-1946)

An Important Reminder:

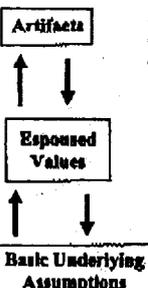
- Culture is a construct
- It can be defined any way you like

One Way of Looking at It

"Culture" involves everything that human beings have thought or made and transmitted across time and space.

Culture manifests itself in patterns of artifacts and behavior. Different groups of human beings exhibit wide variation in these patterns.

"Components of Culture"



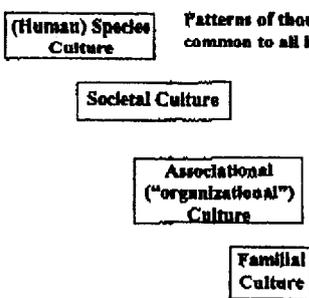
Artifacts
All the phenomena that one sees, hears or feels deriving from the activity of a specific group (objects, overt behavior, art, technology, etc)

Espoused Values
Strategies, goals, philosophies: the patterns of thought on how to deal with the natural, social and spiritual environments faced by the group

Basic Underlying Assumptions
Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings (ultimate source of values and actions)

Adapted from E. Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership

"Levels of Culture"



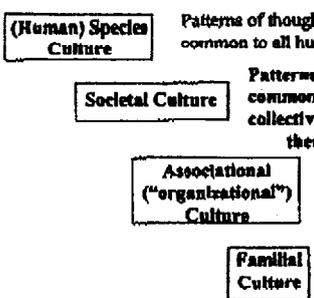
(Human) Species Culture Patterns of thought and behavior common to all human beings

Societal Culture

Associational ("organizational") Culture

Familial Culture

"Levels of Culture"

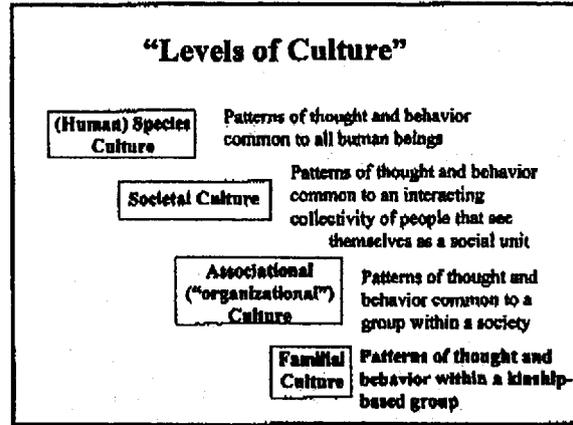
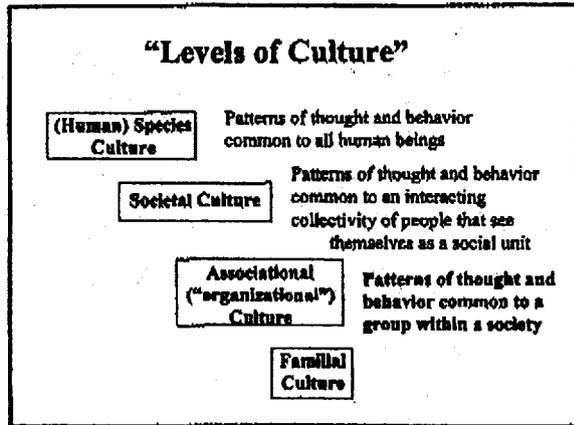


(Human) Species Culture Patterns of thought and behavior common to all human beings

Societal Culture Patterns of thought and behavior common to an interacting collectivity of people that see themselves as a social unit

Associational ("organizational") Culture

Familial Culture



Personality

(We could call this “idioculture”)



An individual’s complex assortment of unique traits that are stable over time and across different settings

- These are influenced by (among other things) genetics, gender, birth order and the natural and cultural environments

Every Individual Possesses a “World View”

- This is highly influenced by the surrounding culture!!

Is there a spiritual dimension to the universe?

Who (or what) is the authority in my life?

What is the meaning of life?

What are my goals and objectives?

What obligations do I have to other human beings?

What accounts for natural phenomena?

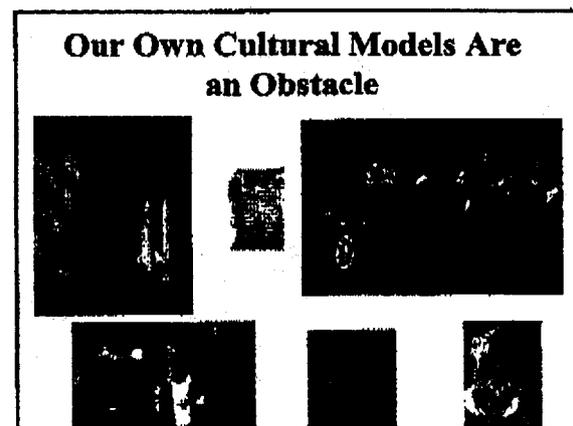
What is aesthetically pleasing?

What is right and what is wrong?

What are appropriate gender roles?

What motivates human behavior?

- ## So what???
- Culture provides an individual with a “window” on reality
 - Culture provides an individual with models or templates for behavior
 - Personality is profoundly influenced by culture
 - Patterns of collective behavior are culturally peculiar



Our Intelligence has a "Technology Fixation"

Americans are notoriously inclined to evaluate others by their own cultural models

Characteristics of the African Security Environment

Urban versus Rural
Low Tech
A Multitude of Actors
Expectations of Leadership

- Personalization of Power
- Flexibility of Relationships
- Ambiguity to Outsiders
- Patrons and Clients

Weak Impulse Control
Basic Orientations
Role of the Supernatural

Urban versus Rural

Low Tech

**Societies in Transition:
A Plethora of Actors**

Diverse Organizations




**In Africa:
Infinite Variety**

Leadership Behavior




Sullivan (I) and Machel: how similar were they?

Individual Traits That Bear on Effective Leadership in Different Societies

Age Appearance Class/caste Mannerisms Gender Size Sexual Orientation Sexual Vigour Marital Status	Aggressiveness Passion/Intensity Persistence Ruthlessness Work Ethic Inclination to empiricism Integrity Loyalty to family Loyalty to subordinates Loyalty to superiors Devotion	Inclination to Dominate Personal Ambition Orientations Deceitfulness Deference to others Self-control Modesty Dignity Religiosity Charisma Self Confidence
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Expectations of Leadership: Personalization of Power




Liberia's Charles Taylor **Kenya's Daniel arap Moi**

Flexibility of Relationships



Ambiguity to Outsiders



Expectations of Leadership: Patrons and Clients

Weak Impulse Control

... Entrepreneurs of violence

Basic Orientations:

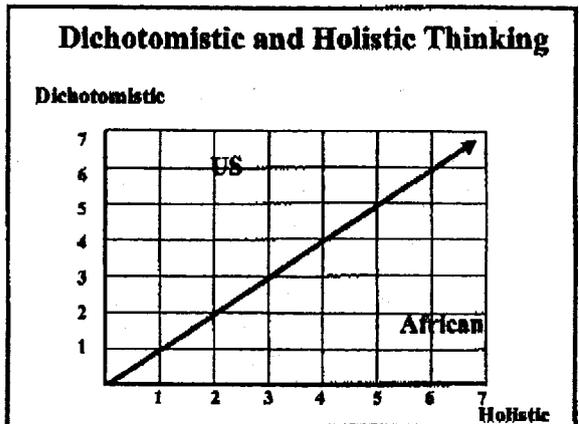
Culturally-influenced ways of coping with the natural and social environment

Basic Orientations:

- Dichotomistic versus Holistic Thinking
- Time versus Event Orientation
- Task versus Person Orientation

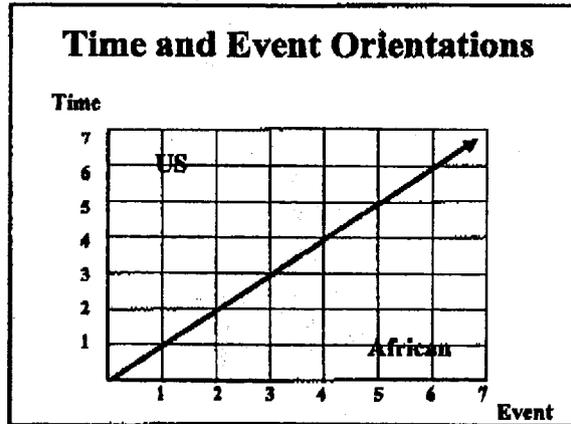
Dichotomistic and Holistic Thinking

Dichotomistic	Holistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgements are black/white or right/wrong. Specific criteria uniformly applied. • Security comes from feeling that one is right and fits a particular social role • Information and experiences are systematically organized; details are ordered to form patterns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judgements are open-ended. Whole person and all circumstances considered in evaluations • Security comes from multiple interactions within whole of society. Person is insecure if confined to partic. roles • Information/ experiences seemingly disorganized; details stand as independent points



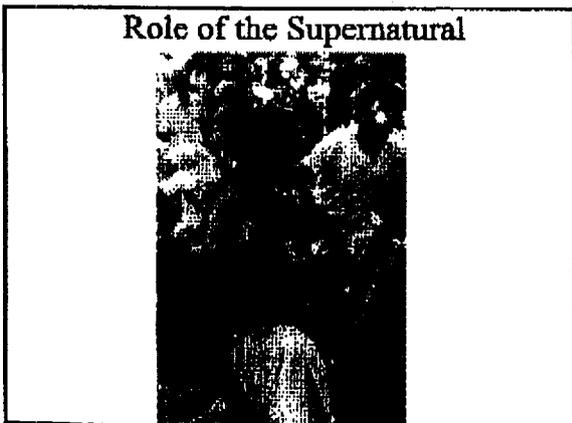
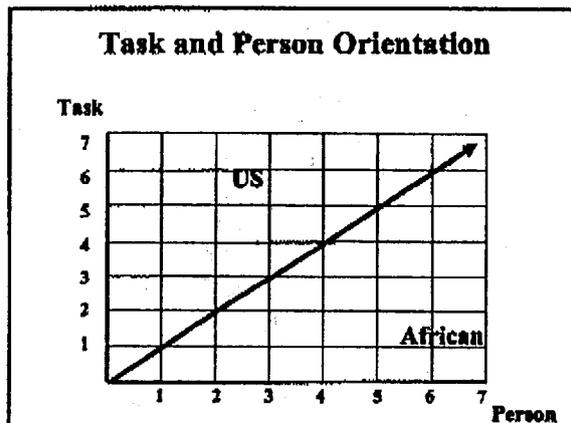
Time and Event Orientations

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Time</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended • Careful allocation of time to achieve max within set limits • Tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities • Rewards for efficient use of time • Emphasis on dates and history 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Event</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for details of the event, not time • Exhaustive pursuit of problem until resolved • Resists precise schedules • Completing the event is reward in itself • Emphasis on present rather than past or future
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Task and Person Orientation

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Task</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on tasks and principles • Finds satisfaction in achievement of goals • Seeks friends with similar goals • Accepts loneliness and social deprivation for sake of personal achievements 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Person</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on persons and relationships • Finds satisfaction in social interaction • Seeks friends who are group-oriented • Deplores loneliness; sacrifices personal achievements for group interaction
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- ### So How Do We Cope???
- Role of "cultural brokers"
 - Need to think "outside own cultural box"
 - Capacity to ask the right questions
 - Importance of effective cross-cultural communications
 - Don't put all the emphasis on hi-tech collection
 - *Haraka haraka haina baraka*

**Suiting the Approach
to the Cultural Context**



Incentives and Disincentives



- Not an impossible challenge



- But not to be taken for granted!!!

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