# Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

by

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## 1.1 RESEARCH TASK GROUP STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

Since 1990, there has been a significant increase in the number of military operations that have required North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) nations to contribute forces as part of a multinational coalition or alliance. Moreover, the range of mission types has broadened to include peacekeeping, peace-support, and humanitarian operations. This trend is expected to continue. There is evidence to suggest that subtle differences in the organizational and national cultures of the countries that contribute personnel to missions can have an impact on the overall operational effectiveness of the multinational force. There exists, therefore, a requirement to consider and integrate the intercultural issues and factors that surround and influence multinational military collaboration, particularly at the operational level of command.

Owing to the complex nature of this research area, it was seen as highly desirable that a multinational perspective be developed regarding the most important topics for investigation. Thus, in the autumn of 2003, the NATO Human Factors and Medicine (HFM) Research Task Group (RTG) on Multinational Military Operations and Intercultural Factors (RTG-120) was formed. RTG-120 consisted of representatives from a variety of NATO countries including the United Kingdom (UK), Canada, the United States (US), the Netherlands, Slovakia, Germany, and France. Over the course of its 3-year mandate, the RTG-120 held meetings hosted by contributing nations in Toulon, France; Strausberg, Germany; Fort Leavenworth, the US; Kösice, Slovakia; and Ottawa and Montreal, Canada. The membership of the group comprised of specialists in the field of team studies, military command and control, military training and selection, and cross-cultural and social psychology. Participants included researchers from Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and QinetiQ in the UK; the Army Research Institute and the Naval Underwater Warfare Center in the US; Defence Research & Development Canada (DRDC) – Toronto, DRDC Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, and the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute in Canada; TNO Human Factors in the Netherlands; the Bundeswehr in Germany; and the Department of Aviation Medicine in Slovakia.

The original proposal for RTG-120 stressed that it was important that a cross-national and cross-cultural forum be developed in order to fully utilize individual nations' current understandings of the issue of multinationality in military operations. It further specified that with the growing number of nations within NATO and the interaction with Partnership for Peace (PfP) nations, the collective knowledge base and guidance within such a forum could only serve to strengthen current NATO understanding of and preparation for future operations. It was intended that the work of the group would allow nations to build on the findings and recommendations from the final report and develop complimentary research programmes to ensure an improved appreciation of the problem area and contribute to appropriate intervention strategies.

Although the initial intention of RTG-120 was to develop a comprehensive review of the literature in this area, this was found to be an impossible task, given the recent accelerated rate of growth of work undertaken on this issue. Thus the present report is not meant to be comprehensive and exhaustive, but rather its aim is to highlight and raise the profile of intercultural factors, and to help drive forward developments in this area. The primary objective of this report is to increase awareness and understanding of the impact of intercultural factors on multinational military operations in the following areas: organizational factors, leadership and command, teams, pre-dispositional and psychosocial factors, communication, technology, and societal-cultural trends. The work of the RTG on these substantive areas comprises the content of this report. It is hoped that the theoretical and applied knowledge generated by the contributing nations of RTG-120 on these topics (or reviewed in this report) will further an understanding of diversity in the areas of human culture,

organizations and technologies of relevance to multinational military operations, and ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of their collaborations.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

As stated earlier, most NATO nations have been responding increasingly to international crises and conflicts in the post-Cold War period through support for multinational operations. An example of this can be observed in Figure 1.1, which illustrates the Canadian commitment in the last part of the 20th century. As can be seen, over an approximately 25-year period, Canada committed to more operations, more frequently, as time passed. Furthermore, almost all of these Canadian Forces (CF) operations were multinational coalitions.

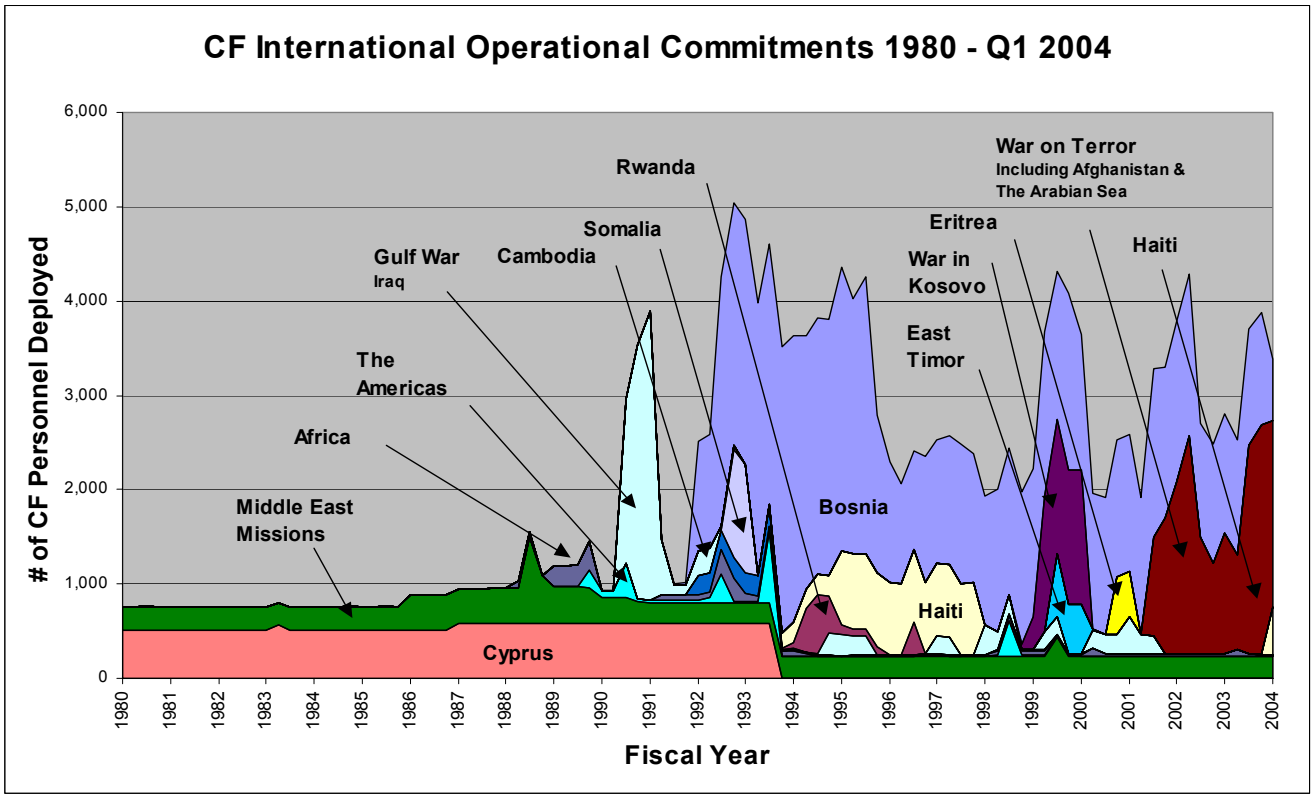


**Figure 1.1: Increase in Canadian Operations 1980-2004 (McKee & Hill, 2006).**

The increase in multinational missions has led to the identification of a number of potential areas of conflict or stress between collaborating countries that stem from inter-group relations and dynamics, which themselves emanate from differences in culture, language,[1] religion, class and gender customs, work ethics, military values, political systems, levels of expertise, and standards of living, to name a few (Plante, 1998). Bowman (1997) identified "ten points of friction" that have historically affected coalitions: differences in goals, logistics, capabilities, training, equipment, doctrines, intelligence, language, leadership, and cultural practices (see also Stewart, Bonner, & Verrall, 2001). Further, although differences in language, terminology, military doctrine, equipment, capabilities, and command organization may all have been present in previous coalition operations, they may be exacerbated by the level of interaction among units and limited preparation time available to most coalitions today (Marshall, Kaiser, & Kessmeier, 1997).

[1] Although the United Nations, for example, has six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish), most missions have used English, or to a lesser extent, French or Spanish, as the official working language (Gillespie, 2002; Plante, 1998).

In the present post-Cold War global context conflicts are more likely to be the result of internal state disintegration ("failed states") or civil war than the result of interstate conflicts, as has been true in the past (Winslow, Kammhuber, & Soeters, 2004). As threats to international peace increase, military forces may find themselves challenged by more diverse, complex environments than ever before, environments which include many other actors such as representatives of the United Nations (UN), the media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Often they must face these challenges in a foreign cultural environment. Such conditions demand a high degree of intercultural competence in dealing with the ethnic-cultural and linguistic diversity of the local population, the cultures of other militaries, and the cultures of other international organizations (Winslow et al., 2004). In addition to military operations, multinational forces are often used during operations other than war, a class of mission that has grown over the post-Cold War era. Such operations include goals as diverse as deterring hostile actions, combating terrorism, and providing relief from natural disasters. These missions, like other military operations, are undertaken by coalitions from diverse national cultures but also involve NGOs and private voluntary organizations.

Such a change in global context demands new understandings of interoperability, or "the ability of systems, units or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units and forces and to use these services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together" (Blad & Potts, 2004, p. 149). The traditional NATO understanding of interoperability, for example, has been largely based on technical issues such as common message formats and data presentation protocols (Blad & Potts, 2004). However, such an understanding is unsuited to post-Cold War multinational operations. An emerging US concept, which describes the richer conceptual depth of the interoperability needed, is "co-operability" (Blad & Potts, 2004). This term describes the shared understanding that cognitive and doctrinal interoperability can provide. In the UK, this is termed "interoperability of the mind;" a similar German concept is "einheit im denken," which means literally "unity in thought" (Blad & Potts, 2004). This term implies a depth of common military education and training to produce officers who approach problems in the same way with confidence and mutual understanding based on shared military education and values (Blad & Potts, 2004). Although an understanding of interoperability that takes into account dimensions such as doctrine, command and control, rules of engagement, standardized operating procedures, training and logistics (the so-called "hard" dimensions of interoperability) appropriately goes beyond technical issues, it still neglects the so-called "soft" dimensions of interoperability, such as language, ethics, and social beliefs, that pertain more to culture (McFate, 2005). Indeed, Winslow and Everts (2001) argue that it is not only system interoperability but operational and particularly "cultural interoperability" – the shared way by which multinational military coalitions or alliances "do business" – that contributes to mission success. Similarly, cultural differences (e.g., in beliefs about information sharing) may affect the ability to advance from technical interoperability to "intercooperability," and may reduce the ability of different elements within a coalition to achieve "intercooperation" (Handley, Levis, & Bares, 2001).

## 1.3 DEFINING CULTURE

As the previous discussion shows, the focus of this report centers on issues arising from the interaction of groups of people from different cultural backgrounds. It would therefore be useful to begin by first briefly defining the concept of culture.

Throughout the past century, many definitions of culture have been developed. One of the most frequently cited conceptualizations of culture is by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), who state that culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting. Schweder (1991) suggests a set of shared meaning systems, and Goodenough (1971) proposes a set of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating and acting. Parsons (1951) explains culture as patterned systems of symbols that direct the orientation of action, and Schein (1985) defines culture as a pattern of basic assumptions with which problems can be coped. Trompenaars and Turner (1993) state that culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems, and Hofstede (1980, 1991) defines culture as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group (nation) from another (nation).

Simply put, culture describes the learned patterns of behavior and thought that help a group adapt to its surroundings. As such culture operates at many different levels and reveals itself in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of groups of people. At a societal or group level, culture is important in helping to explain distinctness between groups of people. At a very general level, culture unifies groups of people and distinguishes them from others. Culture constitutes the vehicle for the perpetuation of identity and for the mitigation, synthesis, and rationalization of change. The fact that culture is such an all-inclusive, multi-faceted concept means that it serves many varied functions, among them marking off a group and so including some and excluding others.

### 1.3.1 Organizational Culture

This report focuses specifically on interactions of organizations across nations and so it would prove informative also to discuss the notion of organizational culture and national culture. Traditionally the term culture has been used by anthropologists and sociologists in the analysis of social and national groupings. However, the utility of the concept in explaining and understanding organizational dynamics and differences has led increasingly to its adoption by business developers, analysts, and human resource professionals. Below, for instance, is a definition of organizational culture proposed by Schein (1984):

> Organizational Culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 1984, p. 4)

Organizational culture should not be viewed as a static, never changing concept. In any given situation, actors may employ different aspects or components of the culture, manifesting the same culture in different ways in different situations. Furthermore, as the society and the economy in which the organization operates change over time, so too do the constituent institutions. Often such changes are imperceptible to the actors involved; however changes can also be dramatic and sudden, especially where an organization has resisted such changes in the past.

Culture has an historical and tested aspect; it has allowed and allows an organization to effectively meet its needs and the challenges that it faces. It involves more than simply structures but includes ways of thinking and acting. It is incorporated into a socialization process for new members to ensure its continuation, and it marks the organization from others. Culture then is a complex whole that goes beyond what can be observed in the hallways of the organizational headquarters. It is more than the logo, the mission, or the chain of command, although these are all part of the culture and are visible cues of organizational culture. As Hagberg and Heifetz point out, “the culture of an organization operates at both a conscious and subconscious level” (2000, p. 2). Organizational culture is a complex phenomenon that includes symbols and symbolism, relationships, behaviors, and values (Alvesson, 2002).

Organizational culture permeates the host institution and operates at many different levels, from the highly visible to the collective unconscious. Schein identifies, for the purpose of analysis, three levels of organizational culture: artifacts and creations, values, and basic underlying assumptions (1985, p. 15).

These levels of culture allow us to build up a series of layers of analysis, as can be seen in Figure 1.2. In much the same way as an archeologist must dig through layers of sediment to uncover older finds, so too the researcher and planner must dig deeper and deeper within the organization to uncover core components of the culture.

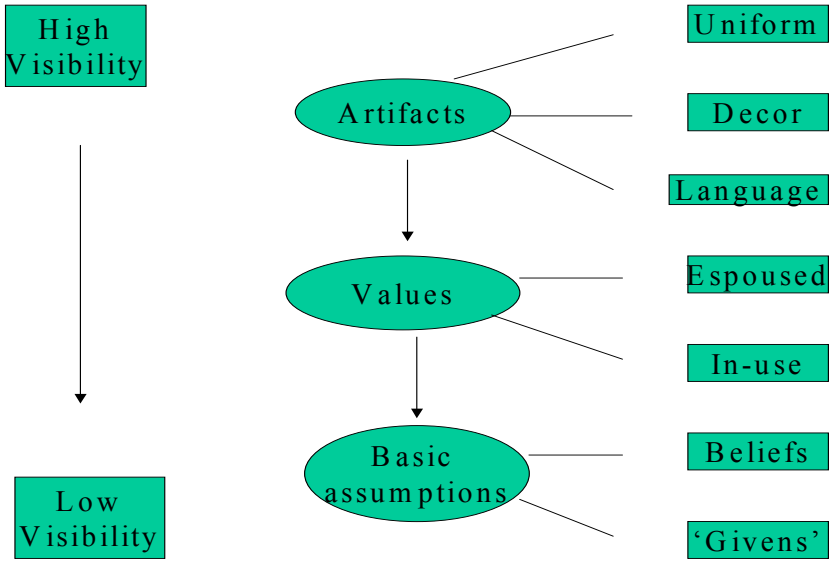


**Figure 1.2: Layers of Organizational Culture (adapted from Schein, 1985, p. 15).**

The most visible manifestations of organizational culture are the artefacts and creations, which include "the constructed environment of the organization, its architecture, technology, office layout, manner of dress, visible or audible behavior patterns and public documents such as charters, employee orientation, materials and stories" (Schein, 1984, p. 4). Identifying these attributes of the organizational culture involves, among other things, analysis of corporate documentation and organization charts, as well as observation of architectural features, employee dress, language, and behavior.

Much less obvious are the values of the organization or the next layer of culture. For Schein, the reference to values is intended to include only espoused values, "what ought to be, as distinct from what is" (1985, p. 15). Others have modified this concept to include actual values, which are seen as having a more direct influence on steering or guiding behavior (Sathe & Davidson, 2000). These values offer rationalization and justification for action and although normally invisible to the actors involved, they can be identified and articulated.

The most abstract layer of culture identified by Schein (1985) involves the basic underlying assumptions. Values derived from actions taken in the past that have allowed the organization to persist become givens. They "sink below the conscious level of culture and become taken-for-granted assumptions that organizational members use to guide their behaviors and attitudes" (Sathe & Davidson, 2000, p. 280). Identification of these elements of the culture requires much more sophisticated and probing analyses of the organization. It might further be argued that this cultural layer is the foundation for all others. For this reason, it is frequently the hardest to identify, and the most resistant to change.

For Rutherford (2001), much of the focus of the literature on organizational culture emphasizes its role as a tool for inclusion. Attention is paid to the cohesive aspects of culture "as a defence against the unknown and a means of providing stability" (Rutherford, 2001, p. 372). These elements of culture provide parameters around the institution that allow people to operate effectively and comfortably within the system, socialize or regulate the absorption of new members, and maintain an identity over time. The other face of this aspect of culture, often ignored, is that it can function to exclude. At times the same processes and cultural elements may be brought to bear to either include or exclude others. Culture then is dynamic and situationally dependent, allowing for opposing roles of unification and differentiation.

Trompenaars and Turner (1993) developed the QinetiQ model of organizational culture (Bradley, Mylle, Strickland, Walker, & Wooddisse, 2002). The model provides another conceptual framework to understand organizational culture, which again is made up of three layers (see Figure 1.3).

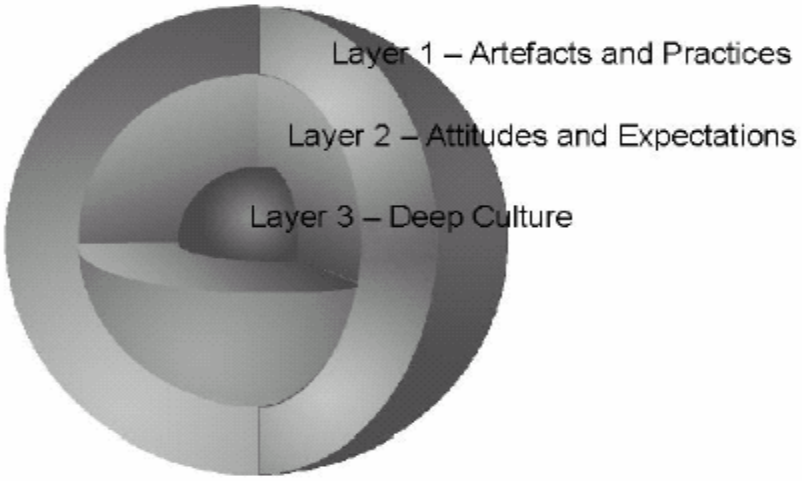


**Figure 1.3: Conceptual Framework for Organizational Culture (Trompenaars & Turner, 1993).**

1) *Layer One – Artifacts and Practices*. This is the observable behavior and tangibles of an organization. This includes such things as groupings, hierarchy, and uniform. Processes and procedures can be thought of as Layer One. Essentially, the surface layer is easily changed and easily adapted by the people in the organization. It represents the explicit culture.
2) *Layer Two – Attitudes and Expectations*. These are the attitudes and expectations that make individuals feel that Layer One is right. It is more conceptual than tangible, and consists of doctrine, customs, and traditional practices. It represents those truths held by the organization, which resist change but which can be adapted in time.
3) *Layer Three – Deep Structure*. This is the source and structure from where attitudes and expectations are generated. It is difficult to attribute specifics to this layer, but it may consist of such things as the relationship between command and subordination. Essentially, this inner layer represents basic assumptions that have underpinned the culture of military forces for centuries. This is the layer of implicit culture.

The value of this model as suggested by its proponent is that it provides insight into the management of change. Changing Layer One is relatively easy as long as Layer Two and Layer Three remain unchanged. Changing Layer Two is very difficult and takes time and firm leadership. Changing Layer Three will be very difficult but not impossible. In some cases a change to Layer One may, on the face of it, be very sensible or insignificant, yet may affect a much deeper cultural instinct or value.

### 1.3.2 National Culture

In the 1980s, Geert Hofstede made a comprehensive attempt to capture national value and cultural differences through a cross-cultural classification scheme of work-related values in organizations. Despite criticism, his five-factor model of culture value dimensions remains the most robust and influential model on culture. Initially, Hofstede (1980) identified four cultural value dimensions. Later work with the Chinese Culture Connection added a fifth dimension based on a study of Asian cultures, a region largely excluded from Hofstede's earlier work (1991). These five dimensions are elaborated below and figure prominently throughout this report:

1) Power distance is the degree of inequality among people that the populace of a country considers normal.
2) Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations. Structured situations are those in which there are clear rules as to how one should behave.
3) Masculinity-femininity is the degree to which values like assertiveness, performance, success, and competition (which in nearly all societies are more associated with the role of men) prevail over values like the quality of life, maintaining warm personal relationships, service, care for the weak, and solidarity (which in nearly all societies are more associated with the role of women).
4) Individualism-collectivism describes whether one's identity is defined by personal choices and achievements or by the character of the collective group to which one is more or less permanently attached.
5) Long-term vs. short-term orientation is based on the values stressed in the teachings of Confucius. Long-term orientation focuses on the degree to which a culture embraces, or does not embrace, future-oriented values, such as perseverance and thrift.

### 1.3.3 Hofstede's Dimensions and Military Culture

One important contribution of these five dimensions is that they afford an opportunity to test specific hypotheses about cultural differences that influence such things as organizational and team effectiveness. Soeters (1997) conducted a study applying these cultural dimensions to the military. He used samples of cadet-officers of military academies in 18 countries as respondents (see also Soeters & Recht, 2001). To demonstrate the relevance of Hofstede's work more clearly, Soeters connected the four original dimensions (long-term orientation was not included in this study) to the well known institutional-occupational model (Moskos & Wood, 1988).

Moskos and Wood (1988) examined the attitudes of soldiers toward their work in the military. On one hand, attitudes may be institutional reflecting a vocational (i.e., professional) orientation, exemplified by patriotism and a total dedication to the military organization. On the other hand, attitudes may be occupational reflecting an attitude toward working in the military as just another job (Moskos & Wood, 1988). This latter attitude implies that military personnel are not solely focused on the internal labor market of the military. Soeters (1997) found that high degrees of individualism, indicating that the cadets feel fairly independent of the organization, and masculinity, reflecting the wish to earn high salaries, are indicators of occupationalism.

The other two cultural dimensions, power distance and uncertainty avoidance, were found to be indicators of certain types of organization: high degrees of power distance and uncertainty avoidance were seen as manifestations of the classic "machine" bureaucracy, or hierarchical, formal rules-based organizations. Low degrees of these cultural dimensions were indicative of more modern flexible results-oriented organizations.

Soeters' study of military academies showed that, compared to their compatriots in the civilian sector, the cadet-officers in general yielded higher scores on power distance and lower scores on individualism and masculinity. These results confirm common notions about differences between civilian and military workers and organizations. In the military, hierarchies and power distances are known to be more elaborated and fundamental to the structure of the organization than they are in the business sector. Also, in the military, collectivism (i.e., group orientation, interdependency and cohesion) is a more important concept than it is among typical civilian organizations. Finally, in the military earning high salaries and striving for individual merit is not valued as much as it is in business corporations. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance (rule orientation, formalization, the wish to continue to work for the military) showed mixed results: some academies, such as those in Germany, Italy, Denmark, the UK, and especially the US, exhibited higher degrees of this dimension, which had been expected, but there were also a

number of academies (the Netherlands, Canada and Norway) that scored lower on this particular dimension (Soeters, 1997).

By and large, the results were consistent with common knowledge about cultural differences between the civilian and the military sectors. These results clearly demonstrate that in the military – contrasted to civilian organizations – something like a supranational culture exists. This supranational military culture is more collectivistic, more hierarchical and less salary-driven than the average civilian working culture. The consequence of this is that military personnel of different origins can often function and get along with each other without too many problems (e.g., Elron, Shamir, & Ben-Ari, 1999). Moskos (1976, 2001) even claims that military personnel from different countries seem to be better suited to work together than they are with civilian personnel from NGOs or local agencies from their own countries.

Page (2003) undertook a similar study applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions to samples of military personnel. These career officers (or officer-equivalent personnel) at the time of the study were mostly attending international courses or conferences in Europe. Included were a number of NATO countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, Canada, Germany, Norway, the UK, and the US) as well as a number of PfP countries (Georgia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). The results from this study largely confirmed the earlier academy findings of Soeters and Recht (Page, 2003). There was one clear exception. Page found that German career officers displayed higher levels of power distance and masculinity when compared to the German student-officers in the Soeters (1997) study. As was found in the Soeters study, the US military proved to be high on masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. As to long-term orientation, which was not measured by Soeters, no significant differences were found in long-term orientation between countries or between military and civilian organizations.

### 1.3.4 Military Culture

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, the organizations involved in this study are somewhat different from most other public and private enterprises. Thus, in addition to understanding national and organizational culture, an existing body of literature analyzing military organizational culture needs to be briefly examined. This will allow readers some insights into the importance and relevance of culture in military operations.

Military organizations are unlike any other public or private institution. While sharing the same fundamental cultural influences as other organizations within a given country, they view themselves, and more importantly, are viewed by many others, as very different. As Soeters points out; "uniformed organizations are peculiar. They represent specific occupational cultures that are relatively isolated from society" (2004, p. 465). The very nature of the principal mission for which militaries are intended also sets them apart from other public or private institutions within a society. As Snider puts it, "Military cultures derive from the purpose or tasks for which society raises militaries" (1999, p. 5). At the same time, military cultures also reflect the cultures of the broader societies in which they exist.

While it could also be said that all organizational cultures derive from their purpose, military institutions remain alone in their primary purpose, seen by Snider as warfighting, which he argues "still determines the central beliefs, values and complex symbolic formations that define military culture" (1999, p. 5). Rather than engage in a debate over the appropriateness of this function as the central element in the military mission, suffice to say that warfighting can be viewed as a critical, and historically important, military purpose. However, given the changing nature of security it might be more appropriate to define warfighting as upholding or securing peace and security by the use of arms.

Although modern militaries are involved in a range of activities or operations other than war, a more encompassing definition of the core military function still has as its central focus the notion of the legally and societally sanctioned use of weapons. In this case, use of weapons is not only to wage war but also to defend or maintain peace either within or outside of national boundaries. Snider articulates four essential

elements of military culture; these include ceremonial displays and etiquette, discipline, professional ethos, and cohesion and esprit de corps (1999, p. 6). In these elements we can still recognize Schein's layers of culture such that ceremonial displays may relate to the most visible (artifacts) and esprit de corps and ethos to the least visible aspects (basic underlying assumptions) of organizational culture.

Zellman, Heilbrun, Schmidt, and Builder neatly summarize the core elements of military culture as "conservative, rooted in history and tradition, based on group loyalty and conformity and oriented toward obedience to superiors" (1993, p. 369). Defined in this way, the potential gulf between military and civilian organizational culture is all the more apparent. The emergence and increased domination of relatively new, non-traditional, "flat" organizations espousing more egalitarian views stand in stark contrast to this admittedly traditional definition of military organizational culture. However, such articulations of the constituent elements of military culture may be said only to accentuate existing differences. For this reason, much thought has been given, particularly in the US, to the acceptable gap between the military and civilian worlds (for US sources, see Snider, 1999; Williamson, 1999; Hillen, 1999; for UK sources, see Dandeker, Higgs, Paton, & Ross, 1997).

That militaries the world over share some common elements, beliefs and ideas is evident; however, this should not imply that all military cultures are the same, a notion that may have influenced the lack of preparations for multinational operations in the past. As Sharp and English have pointed out, the historical development, political and economic background, and national cultural differences that impact on each military has led to marked differences in national military organizations (2001, p. vi). As will be seen, these military intercultural differences are important to consider; otherwise, they can lead to problems and issues in the conduct of multinational operations.

## 1.4 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This report examines the influence of culture on multinational military operations in a number of critical areas relating to operational effectiveness. The next chapter (Chapter 2) deals with organizational factors and looks at the impact of the structure of individual coalition or alliance partners as well as their varying policies and programs on cooperation and morale. Chapter 3 examines research on the different cultural perspectives regarding leadership and command that may be problematic in a coalition or alliance setting. Further chapters examine the research conducted on teams and team building (Chapter 4), cultural predispositions and psychosocial determinants (Chapter 5), communication (Chapter 6), and technology (Chapter 7). Not all key factors fit neatly into these section headings and so Chapter 8 looks at a number of important societal issues such as public opinion, casualty tolerance, and conscripted as opposed to volunteer forces. Once more the analysis focuses on the impact of these national cultural differences on the ability of militaries from different countries to work effectively together. The report concludes with some suggestions to assist in resolving differences and allowing for greater understanding and cooperation within the context of multinational military operations (Chapter 9).

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