

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



NEO



Support to Peace Operations

Humanitarian
Relief



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

American Values are Challenged



Hemorrhagic Fevers
(like Ebola)



Famine and Starvation



Malaria

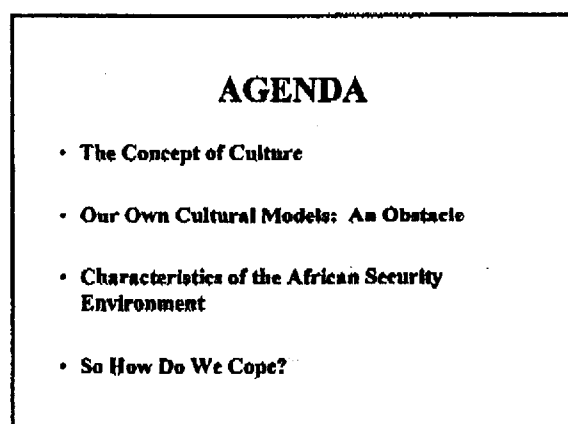
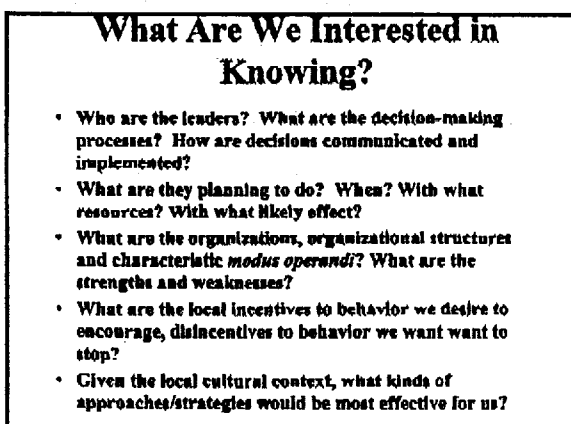
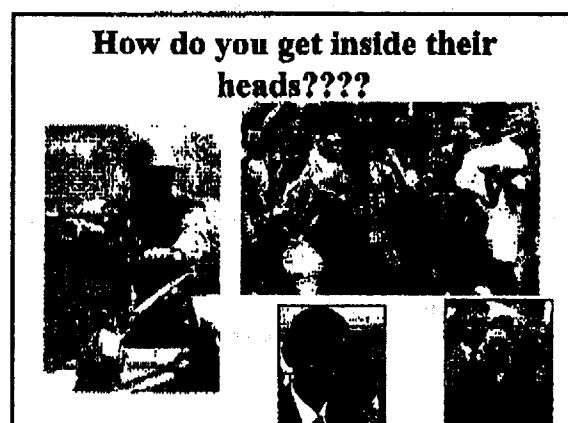
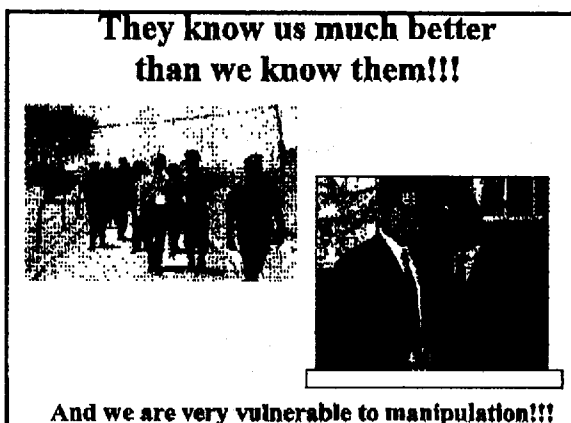
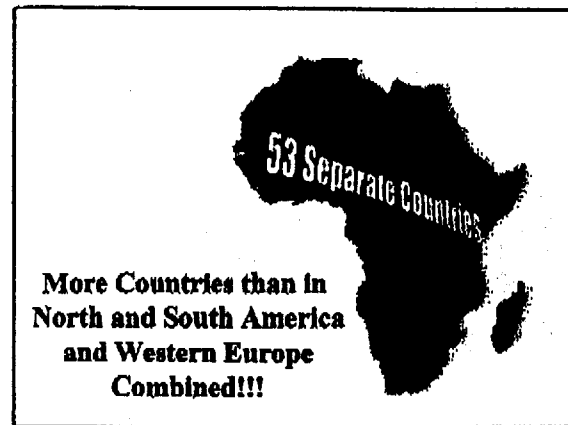
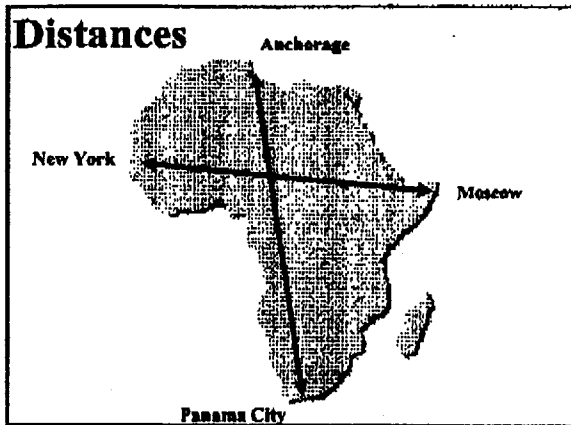


HIV/AIDS

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



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:

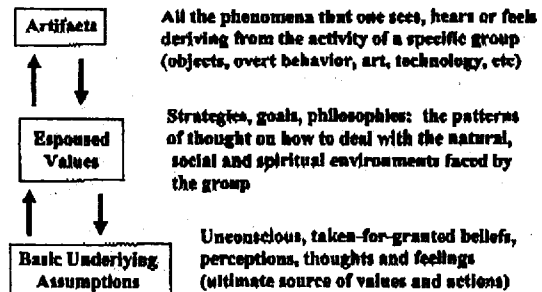
- Culture is a construct
- It can be defined any way you like

One Way of Looking at It

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

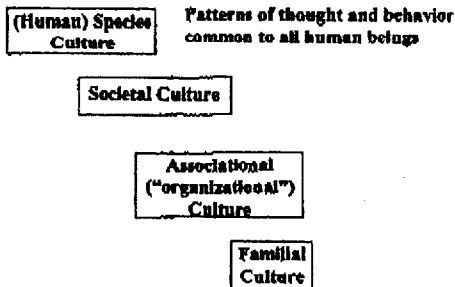
Culture manifests itself in
patterns of artifacts and
behavior. Different groups
of human beings exhibit wide
variation in these patterns.

"Components of Culture"

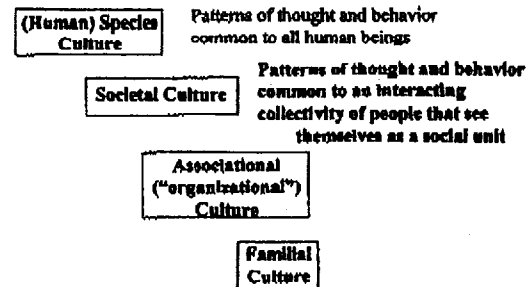


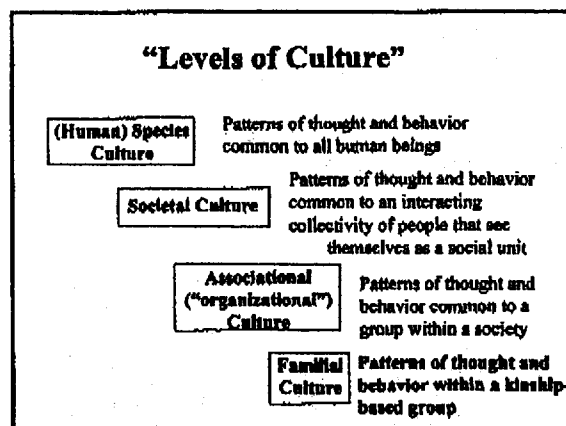
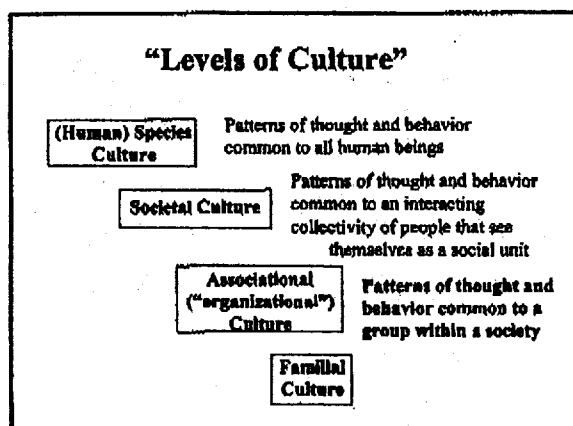
Adapted from E. Schein, Organizational Culture and Leadership

"Levels of Culture"




"Levels of 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?

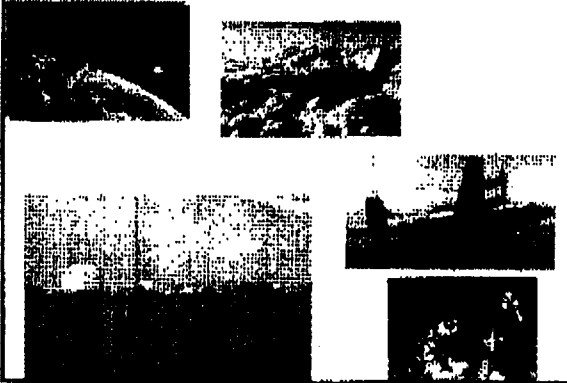
What motivates human behavior?

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 Own Cultural Models Are an Obstacle

Our Intelligence has a "Technology Fixation"

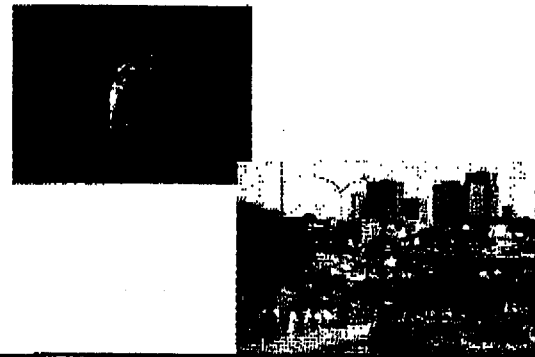


Americans are notoriously inclined to evaluate others by their own cultural models

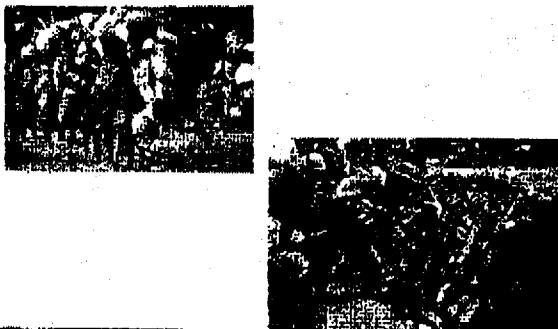
Characteristics of the African Security Environment

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

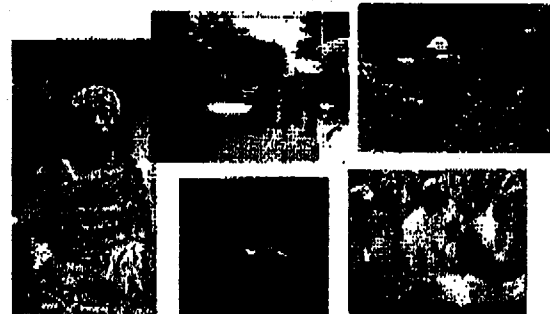
Urban versus Rural



Low Tech



Societies in Transition: A Plethora of Actors



Diverse Organizations



In Africa:
Infinite Variety



Leadership Behavior



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

Individual Traits That Bear on Effective Leadership in Different Societies

Age	Aggressiveness	Inclination to Dominate
Appearance	Faithful/Intensity	Personal Ambition
Class/caste	Perseverance	Orientation
Mannerisms	Ruthlessness	Deceitfulness
Gender	Work Ethic	
Size	Inclination to empiricism	Deference to others
Sexual Orientation	Integrity	Self-control
Sexual Vigour	Loyalty to family	Modesty
Marital Status	Loyalty to subordinates	Dignity
	Loyalty to superiors	Religiosity
	Devotion	Charisma
		Self Confidence

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

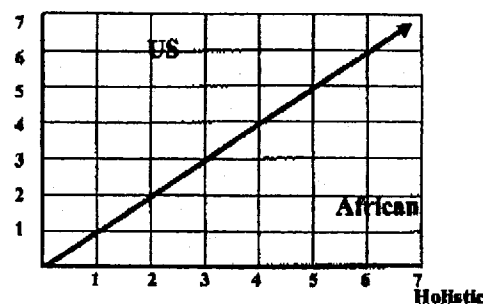
- Judgements are black/white or right/wrong. Specific criteria uniformly applied.
- Security comes from feeling that one is right and fits a particular social role
- Information and experiences are systematically organized; details are ordered to form patterns

Holistic

- 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

Dichotomistic and Holistic Thinking

Dichotomistic



Time and Event Orientations

Time

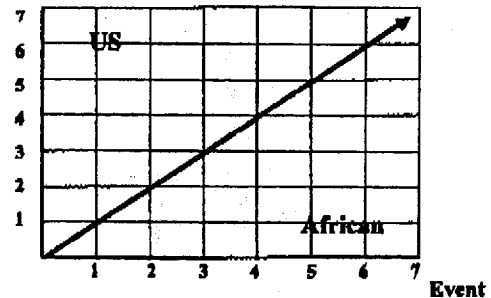
- Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended
- Careful allocation of time to achieve max within set limits
- Tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities
- Rewards for efficient use of time
- Emphasis on dates and history

Event

- 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

Time and Event Orientations

Time



Task and Person Orientation

Task

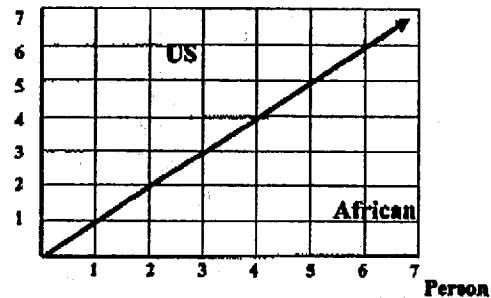
- Focuses on tasks and principles
- Finds satisfaction in achievement of goals
- Seeks friends with similar goals
- Accepts loneliness and social deprivation for sake of personal achievements

Person

- Focuses on persons and relationships
- Finds satisfaction in social interaction
- Seeks friends who are group-oriented
- Deplores loneliness; sacrifices personal achievements for group interaction

Task and Person Orientation

Task



Role of the Supernatural



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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