

Karen D. Davis (ed.), *Cultural Intelligence and Leadership : An Introduction for Canadian Forces Leaders*, Kingston, Ontario, Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2009, 157 pp.*

Reviewed by Irina Goldenberg

Although its importance has been recognized for many decades, the application of “cultural intelligence” to the effectiveness of defence and security operations has taken on progressively greater significance in recent years. In large part, this is due to the increasing number and complexity of groups and organizations involved in recent missions, including, but not limited to, international government and non-government organizations, coalition forces, mercenary soldiers, police and parliamentary organizations, host nation stakeholders and civilians, and adversaries. Consequently, the role of culture and its impact on the success of military operations is receiving increased focus and prioritization.

In the collective volume edited by Karen D. Davis on the subject, cultural intelligence is thoroughly examined, and explicated as a key leadership competency essential for military operational effectiveness and mission success. Cultural intelligence, or CQ, is defined as “*the ability to recognize the shared beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviours of a group of people and, most importantly, to apply this knowledge toward a specific goal or range of activities*” (p.9). This book focuses on CQ as an essential leadership competency, and argues that CQ is a fundamental aspect of leadership development and capability for all leaders in the Canadian Forces (CF), including both Officers and Non-Commissioned Members. However, the comprehensive analysis of CQ in the chapters comprising this volume makes it a valuable resource for military leaders across nations, as well as an excellent tool for facilitating discussion on the integration of CQ with other operational requirements at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels within military missions.

In chapter 1, “Systems Theory, Systems Thinking, and Culture”, written by Dr. Bill Bentley, culture is examined through the lens of systems theory and systems thinking. It is explained that culture is at the root of any human system from nations and civilizations to large communities or institutions, and therefore culture can only be fully understood through

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the consideration of systems thinking. This initial chapter provides a solid basis and orientation for the more in-depth and specific analyses of culture and CQ in subsequent chapters.

In chapter 2, “Culture and Cultural Intelligence”, Karen Davis and Justin Wright discuss definitions of culture and its inherent complexity, replete with variations across and within national, community, and organizational/institutional levels. Following from this, CQ is delineated as a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional construct that goes far beyond cultural knowledge, and that is developed through the integration of knowledge, cognition, motivation, and behaviour, all of which are influenced and facilitated by ‘mindfulness’. Most importantly in the military context, the relevance of CQ to the development of military leadership competencies, and ultimately to operational success, is made abundantly clear.

In chapter 3, “Cultural Intelligence and Strategic Culture”, Dr. Bill Bentley, focuses explicitly on the role of CQ in defence and security through its relation to ‘strategic culture’. Strategic culture refers to a country’s ‘way of war’ and is described as a system of symbols consisting of basic assumptions about the role of war, the nature of the adversary and the threat it poses, the efficacy of the use of force, as well as the conditions under which the application of force is believed to be useful. Strategic culture is identified as one element comprising CQ, but an element that is of critical importance to operational success at all levels at which conflicts and wars are conducted, including the political, strategic, operational, and tactical. It is contended that those involved in implementing a country’s national security policy need to be thoroughly familiar with the national strategic culture within which they operate, as well as that of their alliances and coalitions and, of course, the strategic culture of their adversaries. Canada’s strategic culture is used as an illustrative example to present the kind of analysis that should be conducted in order to understand the strategic culture of another country or political community.

Chapter 4, “Cultural Foundations”, by Karen Davis focuses on the mechanisms by which CQ is developed in CF members, and explicates the manner by which cultural orientations can both contribute to, as well as impair, CQ. It is asserted that although the foundations of CF members’ CQ stem from their life experiences and from Canadian values and identity, CF membership further contributes to the development of CQ in a variety of ways. For example, the CF doctrine is conducive to the development of CQ through its emphasis on transformational leadership styles, as is the increasing emphasis on the development of strong interpersonal skills for all CF members. The significant progress made in the areas of gender integration and cultural diversity in the CF in recent decades is also discussed as an organizational change that has been important for fostering CQ. Military ethos is identified as an expression of culture which helps to define the organization by providing appropriate standards of behaviour, and therefore serves to guide the attitudes and behaviours of military members. Understanding how the CF and CF members are perceived by individuals from other cultures is also discussed as an essential component of CQ.

The relationship between personal identity development, moral reasoning, and CQ is discussed in chapter 5, “Cultural Intelligence and Identity Development”, by Daniel Lagacé-Roy and Justin Wright. The premise is that the development of personal identity is rooted in one’s cultural values and beliefs. The cognitive aspect of CQ is emphasized in that cognitive capacity is essential for understanding one’s personal identity development and properly appreciating issues such as ‘conflict of values’, ‘prejudice’, ‘subjectivity/objectivity’, ‘ethnocentrism’, and ‘relativism’. The five stages of identity development delineated by Robert Kegan are applied as the basis for the process of *making meaning* of one’s own and others’ culture(s), and the impact of this making meaning on CQ is discussed. Making meaning is highlighted as essential to CF members’ personal and professional identities, and has a direct influence on understanding themselves, other cultures, and fundamentally affects what they perceive to be “right” and how they conduct themselves.

The role of CQ within the CF professional development framework (PDF) is discussed in chapter 6, “Developing Cultural Intelligence”, by Robert Walker. CQ complements, and indeed overlaps with, many of the attributes identified as important dimensions for military leaders (e.g., flexibility, communication, and strategic thinking). As such, CQ may be conceptualized as a ‘meta-competency’, one which can have significant impact on operational success in complex security environments. It is argued that CQ capabilities are fundamental to CF leaders in order to address both internal organizational dynamics and external issues, at both national and international levels. Walker notes that the successful development and integration of both leadership capacities and CQ requires integrated and complex learning strategies, particularly andragogical and non-linear learning methodologies. The learning strategies and methodologies with the highest potential for developing CQ are identified, and specific professional development options for CF leaders and CF members are explored.

In chapter 7, “Applying Cultural Intelligence in the Canadian Forces”, authors Brent Beardsley and Karen Davis present a conceptual framework for how CF leaders can understand and integrate CQ into operational planning and execution at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels to improve mission success. The authors also discuss the importance of CQ at the policy level, and emphasize that good policy development is dependent upon accurate, relevant and timely information, and highlight the integral role of incorporating CQ into the policy process. Given this pivotal role of CQ to operational success, CQ is recognized as an essential operational requirement, not simply another ‘nice to have’ capability. As such, it is emphasized that CQ ought to be incorporated into the professional development of CF members at all rank levels.

Taken together, the component chapters in this volume provide theoretical and practical discussions of CQ, cumulatively defining CQ, explicating its importance and utility for military leadership and mission success, and delineating how CQ can be developed and applied in the context of military functioning and operations. Although this book is generally useful for military leaders at all levels, as well as others wishing to expand their knowledge of

CQ, it is particularly valuable for those responsible for the development of effective military teams and the application of effective strategies and tactics in domestic and military operations.

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