

4. Cultural Issues of Post-Conflict Rehabilitation

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Many observers are of the opinion that the beginning of the 21st century has been marked with a new chapter in the evolution of the Euro-Atlantic community – the tragic events of September 11, 2001, triggered a reaction, which led to military interventions in Afghanistan and later Iraq of unprecedented scale in the post-Cold War world. Among other things, this was a remarkable shift in geographical (and this pretty much means cultural) terms, since the Euro-Atlantic community for the whole last decade of the 20th century had been preoccupied primarily with the Balkans – a region which geographically and culturally belongs to the so-called Western civilization, albeit some of its territories are seen by some (S. Huntington being their chief ideologue) to be on the fringes of it.

The mainly West European and American efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo as well as Macedonia, though far from being complete, have already born some fruits and provided plenty of lessons for the ongoing and future engagements elsewhere. As J.D. Montgomery and D.A. Rondinelli argue, ‘explicit, coherent, and transparent policies can draw on lessons from the past to help establish priorities and guide the coordination and integration of activities during chaotic, confusing times, but they must be applied with due regard for the unique circumstances shaped by different cultural, political, and economic conditions in each country that requires reconstruction’⁹⁷. Unfortunately, most circulating considerations (both academic and policy-orientated) drawn from these and other past experiences in post-conflict rehabilitation have tended to be focused exclusively on political, economic and security issues, relegating the cultural aspects of it secondary importance. It is true that stability in a post-conflict society cannot be achieved without massive investment in the rebuilding of the security sector, the economy, and the political and legal systems of the land. Yet, it is also true that ‘local con-

⁹⁷ J.D. Montgomery & D.A. Rondinelli, ‘A Path to Reconstruction: Proverbs of Nation-building’, Harvard International Review, Summer 2004, 29

ditions matter to a considerable degree and have not always been taken sufficiently into account in the past. Different cultural perceptions of legitimate decision-making and the degree of ethnic divisions have to be considered by external actors'⁹⁸. It has proved to be the case in the Balkans, and it is of crucial relevance for several most recent international peacekeeping operations elsewhere, poised to be engaged in post-conflict rehabilitation. For, as T. Duffey correctly points out, 'today's missions are multi-culturally composed and trans-nationally executed across a diversity of cultural contexts'⁹⁹.

The chilly reaction on the part of some of the major European allies to the U.S. and British enthusiasm for invading Iraq can be explained in part by their realized wariness about what the Americans (and British) were pursuing through such military interventions in general. As the case of Afghanistan (and the Kosovo operation several years earlier) proved, the American military machine worked perfectly well – it was as good as it could only be at deposing the Taliban regime. Yet, it appeared that the U.S. administration was not as successful in peace- and nation-building (or post-conflict rehabilitation) there – it turned out that the Americans had no real plan for a post-Taliban Afghanistan. In the words of W. Flavin, 'with regard to Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, because there was no interagency plan before the operation started, there was no clear idea about what termination or post-conflict scenario would look like'¹⁰⁰. Even worse, the Americans (notably, the administration) apparently hardly had idea about the nature of the Afghani society and its culture. This added to the international community's growing puzzlement as to where Afghanistan, under the American guidance, was heading. A new affair in Iraq, with the job in Afghanistan not completed, was not a promising prospect to some.

⁹⁸ M. Overhaus, 'Editorial: Germany and the Conundrums of Post-Conflict Reconstruction', German Foreign Policy in Dialogue, A Quarterly E-Newsletter on German Foreign Policy, IV: 10 (2003), 4

⁹⁹ T. Duffey, 'Cultural Issues in Contemporary Peacekeeping', International Peacekeeping, VII: 1 (Spring 2000), 143

¹⁰⁰ W. Flavin, 'Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success', Parameters, (Autumn 2003), 101

It might be reasoned, however, that the European countries, which decided not to join the ‘coalition of the willing’ against Iraq, did this in part out of greater realization of likely difficulties in the post-conflict rehabilitation, not least of which were of cultural nature. Some observers contend that the French and German doubts about the invasion, though publicly based on its legality and legitimacy, were in no small measure influenced by cultural sensitivities (both have significant Muslim presence) in these countries. The Americans, apparently, overlooked cultural specificity of Iraq (as they did with Afghanistan before)¹⁰¹. This was evident in somewhat appalling rhetoric on the American administration’s side which in the run up to the invasion consciously portrayed the Iraqi population as a *tabula rasa* of a sort, implying that in a post-Hussein Iraq it would be possible to mold it into whatever the world community (in fact, the Americans) deemed it desirable. It was widely expected by Americans that the invading troops would be greeted as liberators. As a former Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East W.P. Lang forcefully put it, ‘the U.S. government decided to invade the Iraq of our dreams, an Iraq in which we would be welcomed in the streets, we would need very minimal force, and there was no requirement for an occupation’¹⁰². This, however, did not happen – although the military performed outstandingly, the fall of the Hussein regime did not usher the country into stability and peace.

‘Cultural Awareness’ and ‘Cultural Literacy’

One is tempted to deduce that the relative success achieved by the Allies in the Balkans in no small part was and is due to the nature of the ‘cultural terrain’ of that region (its belonging to the same civilization as the intervening parties as well as compatibility of the mind-set of the majority of local populations with the vision projected onto them by joint efforts of local power-brokers and the outside powers). That is to say that

¹⁰¹ Although some pre-conflict research done by the military itself draw attention to it. See, for example, C.C. Crane & W.A. Terrill, ‘Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario’, Strategic Studies Institute (Army War College), February 2003

¹⁰² D. Byman, M. Scheuer, A. Lieven, and W.P. Lang, ‘Iraq, Afghanistan and the War on “Terror”’, Middle East Policy, XII: 1 (Spring 2005), 10

most local people tend to subscribe to the post-conflict rehabilitation projects drawn for them. Those who do not – do this out of narrowly nationalistic or economic reasons and not of inherently cultural, some might say ‘civilization’ ones. If one assumes that there are no insurmountable cultural/ civilization cleavages in the Balkans (either among the conflicting sides or between the locals and the peace-keepers), post-conflict rehabilitation there has enormous advantage compared with the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet even in the case of the Balkans, there are numerous reports, especially by humanitarian organizations, on operational difficulties caused by cultural misunderstandings, prejudice and stereotypes on both sides, which occasionally give rise to tensions and even violence. In order to better cope with possible cultural challenges, it is reported that many of the employees of both NGOs and governmental agencies receive some ‘cultural training’ and are even provided with published guidelines on how best to cope with those challenges¹⁰³. However, what in the Balkans has been an issue only to a limited extent has proved to be of major importance in the Middle East and Central Asia – and it is ‘cultural awareness’.

By ‘cultural awareness’ it is meant basic acquaintance with history and language of the society on whose territory both military and civilian authorities are to operate in all phases of the conflict. As I. Skelton and J. Cooper, both members of the House Armed Services Committee, argue, ‘a combat brigade would not be deployed into hostile territory without maps. The beliefs of a culture are as critical as terrain features. The unit should have those coordinates as well’¹⁰⁴. Apparently, the opposite has been the case as ‘cultural awareness’ has been the most neglected element of transnational conflict management in the recent times. Failure to pursue Afghans to take part in the national reconstruction, swelling of the ranks of insurgency and deadlocks in the political process in Iraq, all attest to misjudgments on the occupiers’ side about the local societies.

¹⁰³ This was *inter alia* raised by the participants in the seminar on ‘Post-Conflict Rehabilitation’, held in Reichenau, Austria, between April 30 and May 2, 2005

¹⁰⁴ I. Skelton & J. Cooper, ‘You’re Not from Around Here, Are You?’, Joint Force Quarterly, XXXVI (2004), 14

It might be maintained that ‘cultural awareness’ is an essential prerequisite in transnational conflict situations – whoever is involved in overseas military and/or civil operations (especially post-conflict rehabilitation phase of them), has to have a minimal baggage of knowledge about the local culture – this would save human and material resources and speed up the overall process of conflict resolution, or as I. Skelton and J. Cooper argue in the case of the American involvements, ‘it is cultural awareness that helps determine whether a host population supports long-term American military presence – and may determine the outcome of the mission’¹⁰⁵. The Somali case of the early 1990’s is a good example of this. But it might also be argued that ‘cultural literacy’ would be even more desirable. This includes not only superficial familiarity with basic aspects of indigenous culture(s), but some deeper knowledge of intellectual currents and undercurrents, stratification of society under question, pressure groups, informal authorities, and religion, all this supported by study of appropriate local language¹⁰⁶.

For military personnel of lower ranks (those on the ground) ‘cultural awareness’ apparently would suffice – they have to know as much as it would help save their own and local people’s lives and not alienate the locals from the occupiers. Major General R. Scales, USA (ret.) in his recent testifying before the House Armed Services Committee suggests that ‘Great Britain’s relative success in Basra is due in no small measure to the self-assurance and comfort with foreign culture derived from centuries of practicing the art of soldier diplomacy and liaison’¹⁰⁷. It is indeed true that the UK in its evolution as an empire has undoubtedly acquired all sorts of experiences, among them cultural. And its military

¹⁰⁵ I. Skelton & J. Cooper, ‘You’re Not from Around...’, 12. See also T. Duffey, ‘Cultural Issues...’, 151, where she forcefully argues that ‘maintaining good relations with the local community, a prerequisite for successful operations, relies on peacekeepers’ understandings of the local population’s culture and respect for their cultural traditions.’

¹⁰⁶ Duffey speaks about ‘culture-general’ and ‘culture-specific’ components in the overall ‘cultural training’. T. Duffey, ‘Cultural Issues...’, 164

¹⁰⁷ R. Scales, ‘Army Transformation: Implications for the Future’, Statement of Major General Robert Scales, USA (ret.), Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee on July 15, 2004, 4

posted overseas has for long been ‘culturally trained’. The U.S., on the contrary, has had no proper chances (with but a few engagements in countries with alien cultures, which would have lasted more than several decades) and/or interest to do this. In the words of an outside observer, a German M. Overhaus, ‘the US so far has not acquired much experience with “picking-up the pieces” after the military’s job is done’¹⁰⁸. This is true; yet the U.S. learns (or at least should) with every new experience¹⁰⁹. For example, military in both Afghanistan and Iraq operations were distributed booklets with basic information on the country. Similar booklets were circulated among the allied troops and at least some of the allies had instruction/ introduction-to-country briefings for their troops just before deployment. The Polish, charged with administering a sector of Iraq, brought along some 30 ‘area specialists’ to assist both the military and civilian authorities.

The *Culture Smart Card (Guide for Communication and Cultural Awareness)*, first prepared by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) in February 2004¹¹⁰ (subsequently revised in November 2004¹¹¹), is one of the efforts (though somewhat belated) to raise the level of ‘cultural awareness’ among the American (and also allied) troops. Though a welcome initiative in itself, the Card is so ‘dry’ in its information that it would be naïve to expect it to have any impact on relations between the occupying troops and locals. Moreover, not counting its numerous errors and typing/ printing mistakes, it contains several ideas, which can be seen as biased and even negatively predisposed toward certain features of the local (specifically Iraqi, but also Arab in

¹⁰⁸ M. Overhaus, ‘Editorial: Germany and the...’, 5

¹⁰⁹ The rise of awareness for the need of getting acquainted with remote cultures and especially their languages is evident in ‘A Call to Action for National Foreign Language Capabilities’, issued by the U.S. Department of Defense on February 1, 2005, accessible at http://www.nlconference.org/docs/White_Paper.pdf

¹¹⁰ ‘Iraq Culture Smart Card: Guide for Communication and Cultural Awareness’, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, February 2004, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/usmc/iraqsmart-0204.pdf>

¹¹¹ ‘Iraq Culture Smart Card: Guide for Cultural Awareness’, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, November 2004, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/usmc/iraqsmart-1104.pdf>

general) culture. On this particular aspect see further below in the section on Orientalism.

As experiences of the last three and a half years show, with or without ‘culture smart’ cards, the military next to being skilled in handling machinery have also to be initiated into the local cultures, for as R. Scales argues, ‘the military possess the technological means in Iraq to conduct net-centric warfare to proficiency unparalleled in the history of warfare. But it lacked the intellectual acumen and cultural awareness and knowledge of the art of war to conduct culture-centric warfare’¹¹². In R. Scales’ opinion, this can be improved: ‘every young soldier should receive cultural and language instruction. The mission of soldier acculturation is too important to be relegated to last minute briefings prior to deployment’¹¹³, and continues: ‘to assist in the acculturation process the Department of Defense should be required to build databases that contain the religious and cultural norms for world populations – to identify the interests of the major parties, the cultural taboos – so that soldiers can download the information quickly and use it profitably in the field’¹¹⁴. What R. Scales advocates is a thorough reform of the preparation of the military for overseas operations (especially of nation-building and post-conflict rehabilitation phase), something the U.S. military is more and more being engaged in for prolonged periods of time. I. Skelton and J. Cooper’s remark that ‘the Armed Forces are busier than ever before, but they are not too busy to be culturally aware’¹¹⁵, itself partially based on Scales’ testifying, reinforces his ideas. The ‘Call to Action for National Foreign Language Capabilities’ of the Department of Defense is but one of such new initiatives.

Much of what has been said above applies also to civilians engaged in the overseas operations (usually in the post-conflict rehabilitation phase). Yet, it might be argued that civilian authorities have to be not only ‘culturally aware’ but also ‘culturally literate’. Their familiarity

¹¹² R. Scales, ‘Army Transformation: Implications...’, 3

¹¹³ R. Scales, ‘Army Transformation: Implications...’, 8

¹¹⁴ R. Scales, ‘Army Transformation: Implications...’, 9

¹¹⁵ I. Skelton and J. Cooper, ‘You’re Not from Around...’, 16

with the culture of the local society has to surpass that of the military's. The 'culture smart' cards would not do here. Much more is needed. Of course, one cannot expect every single government official or employee in private sector, charged with specific duties related to or on the territory of conflict, to be well versed in the intricacies of local cultures. Yet, one is to expect (or even to demand) that those, who make decisions, either themselves possess knowledge of cultures their decisions are to affect or have expert-assistants, who do so to advise them. Only 'culturally literate' decisions have propensity to be welcomed by local populations. It is also advisable that even lower-level government and private sector employees are exposed to advance 'culture training' – e.g. are given courses on history, language, religion, and society of countries they are to be posted. Some private enterprises have already started this practice. Certain governmental agencies do this also but the results so far, unfortunately, are not up to the expectations.

'Cultural awareness/ literacy' serves in general at least two purposes: one, to get to know the culture of the enemy (e.g. Taliban, al-Qaida, jihadism, Iraqi insurgency) and two, to get to know the culture of the potential friend (those willing to cooperate). As for the culture of the enemy, it primarily entails 'difficulties that would be encountered during the present "cultural" phase of the war where intimate knowledge of the enemy's motivation, intent, will, tactical method and cultural environment has proven to be far more important for success than the deployment of smart bombs, unmanned aircraft and expansive bandwidth'¹¹⁶. Though it is first and foremost for the military to tackle the problem of enemy on the ground, it is also business of civil authorities to direct military's activities so that they yield best results not only in the short-term but also long-term perspective. In other words, knowing one's enemy's 'culture' – ideologies, motivations and aims, as well as mobilization channels – would enhance effectiveness of both decisions of civilian authorities and performance of military. As for the culture of the potential friend, the issue evolves around enlightened relationships based on mutual trust built on understanding, tolerance, and respect. The biggest risk and mistake that permeates today's post-conflict rehabilitation efforts is

¹¹⁶ R. Scales, 'Army Transformation: Implications...', 2

ignorant (and often arrogant) behavior of the occupiers, which alienates the locals and even pushes them into the hands of resistance. (Think of the Abu Ghraib fallout!) Thus, military conflicts, because of cultural ignorance (on both sides, one has to admit), unwillingly and unconsciously tend to become cultural conflicts. This is to be avoided by all means, if the occupying powers expect any positive (and not delayed) outcome from conflicts in question.

The Trap of Orientalism

Yet, 'cultural awareness/literacy', if handled neglectfully, is prone to become *ancilia Orientalismus*. Orientalism, a broad notion denoting unique European view of non-European cultures, implies a dichotomy and binary opposition of 'us' versus 'them', where 'they' are perceived to be of lesser (civilization) status. Orientalism, in its critics view, is a vise, which has been crippling relations between Europeans and 'Orientals', especially since its virtual institutionalization in the colonial era. As E. Said has passionately argued in his *Orientalism*¹¹⁷, too often imperial European (and recently American) decision- and policy-makers assumed to have grasped the essence of respective non-European societies (their cultures) and acted upon that perception, while in fact they were acting upon wrong assumptions and misjudgments. In the case of the U.S., in the opinion of many an heir to and inheritor of the European imperial heritage, as W.P. Lang argues, 'we Americans, as a group, and the governments that we create for ourselves, have a continuing inability to understand that other peoples really are different than we are'¹¹⁸. An even graver problem is that 'we believe we understand how these people ought to be and that we can organize them with minimal effort because they really want to be like us'¹¹⁹. In Duffey's words, 'this approach assumes a prescriptive stance: "we know what's best for them"'¹²⁰. Lang and Duffey's reasoning is echoed in a recent 'National Interest' Editorial, which by the way has split the editorial board of the magazine into

¹¹⁷ E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books 2003 (1978))

¹¹⁸ D. Byman, M. Scheuer, A. Lieven, and W.P. Lang, 'Iraq, Afghanistan and...', 9

¹¹⁹ D. Byman, M. Scheuer, A. Lieven, and W.P. Lang, 'Iraq, Afghanistan and...', 10

¹²⁰ T. Duffey, 'Cultural Issues...', 152

two camps: ‘we should abandon the demonstrably false pretense that all nations and cultures share essentially the same values. Every country, every region, every civilization has its own cycle, circumstances and path of development’¹²¹.

R.F. Ellsworth and D.K. Simes accuse the contemporary American approach toward alien cultures of infantilism, passionately arguing that the U.S. administration ‘proudly pronounced that the liberation of Iraq was just a beginning of a grand democratic transformation of the Greater Middle East. It required an inordinate degree of naivety, and frankly, ignorance about the real conditions in Iraq and in the Middle East in general to believe that this overly ambitious scheme could work’¹²². Indeed, failure to understand and appreciate differences among cultures is one of the core aspects of the neo-Orientalism of today. Yet, this can be changed through educational and other means proposed by R. Scales and others (see above discussion on ‘cultural awareness/literacy’). A much more complex problem is that the ‘knowledge’ generated in the process of the study of alien (Oriental) cultures too often represents not the actual reality of those cultures but rather our perception of that reality. In other words, there is a gap between ‘what is out there’ and ‘what we think that there is out there’. Therefore, there is a major difference between unprejudiced inquiry into remote cultures in order to get to know them better, on the one hand, and searching for proofs of preconceived stereotypes about those cultures, which merely confirm our in-advance-held ‘knowledge’ and expectations about those cultures, on the other hand. In the latter case the whole process of study does not lead to genuine ‘culture awareness/literacy’, but rather to becoming a vessel and transmitter of the very Orientalist notions. In such a case, it is most likely that the locals will not subscribe to the picture of their culture drawn by outsiders, for the outsiders might assume to know the local

¹²¹ R.F. Ellsworth & D.K. Simes, ‘Realism’s Shining Morality: The Post-Election Trajectory of US Foreign Policy’, The National Interest, Winter 2004/05, at <http://www.nationalinterest.org/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=92CC3CD2669245CFBCA1759C597E9A1E&nm=Articles+and+Archives&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=1ABA92EFC8348688A4EBEB3D69D33EF&tier=4&id=32391DAFA4EA43888B1F0DCB70B2A63E>

¹²² R.F. Ellsworth & D.K. Simes, ‘Realism’s Shining Morality...’

culture but in fact they would be basing their decisions on stereotypes the locals themselves might be forcefully rejecting.

Let us briefly consider ‘The Culture Smart Card (Guide for Communication and Cultural Awareness)’ of the MCI, which comes in two slightly different versions, in this light. First of all, the problem with the ‘Card’ is that its designers aimed at squeezing as much information as possible in a very limited space. This usually leads to sweeping generalizations, simplifications and reductionism. This ‘Card’ is no exception. In a tradition of positivist science, the creators of the ‘Card’ compartmentalize the Arab/ Iraqi culture by using tables and graphs that supposedly typify behavior and beliefs of locals. For example, the ‘Card’ links the colors of headscarf (Arabic, *ghutra*) worn by some Arab men to both the place of their origin and their having or not having performed the pilgrimage (*hajj*). This, for one, is wrong. Moreover, such simplifications stigmatize the locals in the eyes of soldiers, who, following the information on the ‘Card’, might be inclined to expect locals to behave accordingly. Thus, practically, all ethnic groups would be expected to have members of other ethnic groups, just as the ‘Card’ states.

The ‘Card’ further stigmatizes Arabs/Muslims by describing Wahhabis as those who ‘never shave their beards’. But so do many other Muslims. The implication the ‘Card’ suggests is that those Muslims, who wear beards are Wahhabi (in itself a negative term, as they are also described as ‘puritanical’), which is simply not true. The ‘Card’ also misses the point when it says that ‘Madrassah’ is ‘Islamic educational system’. In attributing certain meanings to colors used by Muslims, the ‘Card’ notes that green is (for whatever undisclosed reason) ‘particularly meaningful to the Shia’ ignoring the fact that it is Saudi Arabia and Libya – both staunchly Sunni – whose state flags are entirely green or that the Sunni Muslim fighters in Chechnya, Palestine and elsewhere wear green ribbons on their foreheads. In fact, many observers would contend that it is black, which is favored by Shia. The ‘Card’ further trivializes Muslims (though not indicating which branch of Islam) by describing *Ashura* as something that ‘includes public, self-inflicted mutilation’. It also says that ‘admitting “I don’t know” is shameful for an Iraqi’ and that ‘con-

structive criticism can be taken as an insult' (sic!) – statements that are so classically Orientalist (i.e. denigrating the local culture).

This brief inquiry into the contents of this 'culture smart' (sic!) card shows that though the American military now have it and might assume to have learned from it about the Iraqi society and its culture, too often they will be proved wrong. Thus even with this attempt to improve the situation on the ground, I. Skelton and J. Cooper are correct in their assessment, when they conclude that 'though it may be premature to draw definitive lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq, it is clear that the Armed Forces lack sophisticated knowledge of foreign countries'¹²³. One might add that that which is proposed as 'knowledge' too often is infested with misjudgments, biases and stereotypes so that it resembles the British and French Orientalism of the 19th century. In this vain, the American perception of the 'Other' in the beginning of the 21st century is seen as not having improved much in comparison with the imperial (colonial) experiences of the former empires.

In particular, it would be expected that 'The Iraq Culture Smart Card' is an intellectual product of learned men, knowledgeable and not merely 'culturally aware' in the field of Muslim-Arab-Iraqi cultures. Their failure in preparing a more sympathetic 'Card' can of course be partially due to their lack of knowledge and expertise. Yet, it could be suspected that there is another, more serious reason – inherent Orientalism, which pervades most of the contemporary American (and to a lesser extent European) society. Today's neo-Orientalism is a semi-conscious denial to other (and differently thinking) cultural groupings aspirations for symbolic power. As D. Tuastad, drawing on P. Bourdieu, argues, 'symbolic power is power to construct a hegemonic version of reality'¹²⁴. And continues: 'the means of production in this sense is also the means to produce distorted images of dominated people. Hence, resistance also involves resistance to the imaginaries produced by the hegemonic

¹²³ I. Skelton & J. Cooper, 'You're Not from Around...', 12

¹²⁴ D. Tuastad, 'Neo-Orientalism and the new barbarism thesis: aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s)', Third World Quarterly, XXIV: 4 (2003), 591

power'¹²⁵. The Iraqi resistance to the 'images' drawn of them, both physical (military) and ideological, attests to this maxim.

Concluding Remarks

'Cultural awareness', not to mention 'cultural literacy', has been so far one of the most neglected elements in recent post-conflict rehabilitation efforts in which members of the Euro-Atlantic community have been taking part. As the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq suggest, better acquaintance with both the 'enemy's culture' and 'friend's culture', would have enormously enhanced the results of international missions there, not the least of which would have been saving of lives on both sides. Greater realization that the 'institutions of governance also need to be developed in the context of Afghan (or any other local – *my addition*) history and social relations rather than simply implanted from off-the-peg models of liberal democracy'¹²⁶, would help to set more realistic goals, which would be more in line with local cultures and therefore more acceptable to local populations.

Yet, one has to guard against manifest or even latent Orientalism, which is prone to preclude one from grasping the realities of culture under question. It is essential that all efforts to improve 'cultural awareness/literacy' of both military and civilian personnel for work in alien cultures be as free from biases, prejudices, and stereotypes as possible. Only Orientalism-free 'culture training' would eventually pay off. Thus, among the short- (but also long-) term objectives of both the military and civilian administrations should be setting up of structures for diffusing 'Orientalism-free cultural awareness'. To rephrase I. Skleton and J. Cooper, those who one or another way are engaged in overseas missions cannot be too busy to be culturally aware.

¹²⁵ D. Tuastad, 'Neo-Orientalism and...', 591

¹²⁶ Ch. Cramer & J. Goodhand, 'Try Again, Fail Again...', 905