Inside this Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative A Framework for Understanding</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative and Culture</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Politics</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative and CIMIC</td>
<td>7-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Recommendations</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NARRATIVE AND CIMIC

UNDERSTANDING MILITARY ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE EYES OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

Foreword

Ms. Andrée Mulder (NLD) carried out a research internship at the Concepts, Interoperability and Capabilities branch from January 2013 to March 2013. Her internship focused on the CIMIC contribution to the (grand) narrative, resulting in a position paper for the CCOE. The project was aimed at supplementing the CCOE’s work in the area of the relevance of culture for the military. Next to that, the project fitted into the CCOE’s current involvement in the Multinational Information Operations Experiment (MNIOE). This CIMIC messenger is the result of Ms. Mulder’s work, and will explain the Narrative concept, its operational relevance, and its impact on successful conduct for CIMIC.

In July 2012 Ms. Mulder graduated as an honours student Utrecht University, obtaining a BA degree in Cultural Anthropology, with a minor in globalization and a specialization in (ethnic) identification processes. As a part of her bachelor thesis Ms. Mulder has performed a fieldwork research in Nicaragua on post-conflict identification struggles and social memory.

W. Baron
Director CCOE
INTRODUCTION

Narratives are an important element to be considered in the information war that characterizes contemporary conflicts. Within the military the narrative concept is already being used in the context of creating a mission or coalition narrative, partially aimed at gaining popular consent among local population for their presence and activities. Significantly less attention is given to trying to understand the existing local narratives, and how these narratives link to both the circulation of stories and to the larger cultural fabric of a group. A better understanding of these narratives would allow for more insight into the cultural context of an area of operations, and into the various meaning-attributing processes that groups participate in to make sense of the events that are happening around them. The aim of this article is to contribute to the current discourse on narrative by exploring the following two questions: (1) how can the narrative concept be understood from a cultural, population-centric point of view? and secondly, (2) in which ways is the narrative concept relevant for CIMIC personnel? 1 The first three chapters will discuss the narrative concept, its link to culture, and its relation to the struggle for popular consent. The second part of the article will build on this theoretical knowledge to examine how local narrative analysis is relevant for CIMIC personnel in order to improve their assessments of the civil environment. Lastly, the final chapter provides a set of recommendations.

1 NATO’s definition of CIMIC is: the coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil (non-military) actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies. Within the current discourse on NATO’s policy on Civil-Military Interaction (CMI), CMI is the appropriate engagement, governed by political decisions, between military and non-military actors. CMI is therefore a permanent strand in order to optimize NATO’s contribution to a coherent response by the International Community. CMI takes place throughout the entire crisis management process, prior to and during its operations and missions, and it requires adequate capabilities, functions, and procedures. CIMIC personnel are therefore an integral part of CMI.

CHAPTER I

Narrative – A Framework for Understanding

Although within the realm of scholarly research many different definitions of narrative exist, for the purpose of this article the choice has been made to define narrative in the following fashion:

A narrative is a continuously evolving system of interrelated stories that share common elements. It structures audience interpretations of events by functioning as a framework for understanding external data. The audience uses this framework to constantly order and re-order data into patterns that make sense to them. 2

The definition of narrative used in this article consists of two basic elements: (1) narrative as a system of stories, and (2) narrative as a framework for understanding events. These two elements are closely interrelated. In order to fully grasp the dual logic of this concept this article will now turn to discussing both elements separately before bringing them together. This chapter and subsequent chapters will make use of the narrative example provided in the textbox below in order to illustrate the narrative concept and its functions in a military context.

2 This is a definition based amongst others on insights from the book “Narrative Landmines” and the April 2013 MNIOE workshop. It is relevant to note that the Multinational Information Operations Experiment (MNIOE) White Paper is currently in the process of developing a narrative definition that resembles but is not similar to the one used in this article, stating that: “A narrative is both a way of understanding and a way of representing information. In both cases it involves cause and effect of participants, actions, and events connecting desires (usually predicated by conflict) to resolution (actual desired or implied). In so doing it embodies, promotes, and creates values, legitimacy, and identity around which entities (organisations or activities) can unite. Above all it resonates with its internal and external audiences.” Although this definition is accurate and helpful, for the purpose of this article the choice has been made to use a more general definition that suffices to explain the basic elements and functions of the narrative concept without going into too much detail.
“In 2005, U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq began an outreach campaign inoculating cattle, trying to prevent significant losses in the face of drought and disease. Due to the drought and diseases significant numbers of cattle were dying. What began as an economic stability program quickly became a problem when rumours spread that the U.S. Army veterinarians were poisoning the cattle in order to starve the Iraqi people.”

Bernardi et al., 2013

The first part of the narrative definition describes narrative as “a continuously evolving system of interrelated stories that share common elements”. Within each setting where people interact, be it a family, community, or country, communication takes place and stories are told. Stories in essence are an interpretation of events and external data. These stories may come in the form of rumours, accounts of first-hand experiences, religious texts, folk tales, news items, legends and so forth. What binds all of these different story forms is the fact that they are constructed out of external data consisting of four basic elements: character(s), settings, events, and actions. Through the process of interpretation these elements are linked together as a sequence of events involving characters in settings (Bernardi et al., 2012). Additionally a story demonstrates a causal logic by describing the event trajectory from cause (conflict) to result (resolution) through the actions of characters. In the case of the textbox example, the story consists of a sequence of events (cattle dying, inoculation of cattle), characters (U.S.-led coalition forces), and a setting (Iraq). These story elements were linked by the local population in such a way that the U.S.-veterinaries’ action of inoculating cattle was seen as the cause of the cattle dying, instead of the intended solution to this problem. This demonstrates how multiple interpretations of an event can exist simultaneously, and that they are not necessarily based on facts or objective truths; rather they are ‘storyfied’ interpretations of an event. The sometimes non-factual base of a story will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters.

A narrative is a system of stories that are interrelated because they share certain characteristics: they might involve the same characters, be centered on the same event(s) or share a similar structure or story form. A narrative connects stories together in a way that appears logical to people. In doing so, it is able to incorporate new stories that arise as much as it can revitalize old stories that exist in the collective memory of the audience. This demonstrates why narrative is described as a system of stories instead of merely a collection of stories: it is a dynamic network of stories that allows for the constant incorporation of new external data, and by consequence the system itself is continuously evolving, growing larger and at times more complex (Bernardi et al. 2012).
When a story is incorporated into a narrative, it is placed within a system of related stories that helps the audience understand and interpret it. This is what links the narrative as a system of stories to the second part of the definition: “[narrative] structures audience interpretations by functioning as a framework for understanding external data. The audience uses this framework to constantly order and re-order data into patterns that make sense to them”. Storytelling is one of the foremost methods of organizing data about the world; it is a continuous process of data gathering, pattern recognition, and comprehension. People create stories following certain patterns and structures. Be it consciously or unconsciously, people look for these patterns and structures to order events, and attribute meaning to what they see and hear. A narrative then provides a framework for understanding this continuous flow of external data, and helps structure these data in a way that feels ‘obvious’ or ‘logical’ to the audience.

In the textbox example it was the local narrative existing among the local Iraqi population that patterned their way of structuring events. Further inquiry showed that the military activity was interpreted by the local population as a demonstration of the U.S. Army in Iraq as being engaged in a crusade, destroying land and livelihoods of Iraqi people. This illustrates how interpretations that appear obvious and logical to one group might seem strange and counter-intuitive to another. This distinction can be explained by the fact that narratives to a large extent are founded in a group’s specific cultural context and traditions. It is this relationship between narrative and cultural context that will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II
Narrative and Culture

Narratives do not come into existence in a vacuum. They are not self-contained entities, but are engaged in a dialogue with other stories, narratives, cultural traditions and social ideologies. Each story and narrative comes into existence and is interpreted in a specific cultural context; it reflects cultural traditions, values, beliefs and expectations and is based on prevailing and pre-existing understandings. This is why the same story is often interpreted differently by people with a different cultural background, much like we have seen in the example of the U.S. veterinaries inoculating cattle. The way of interpreting a story is to a large extent based on the cultural knowledge of the audience, in this case the local population. The story is interpreted in such a way that it fits in coherently with the larger cultural fabric of the group, which presupposes the members of this group to have a basic knowledge about the cultural archetypes, story forms, and master narratives that dominate the process of understanding external data. These archetypes, story forms and master narratives are the main culturally provided, top-down schema by which a member of a group begins to comprehend and identify with a new story or a story positioned in a new light. Understanding how these culture-specific narrative elements influence the way a population ‘reads’ external data, could allow for a more accurate prediction of how military activities are likely to be interpreted by the local population:

1. Archetypes.

The previous chapter discussed the four main elements of each story: character(s), settings, actions and events. In the process of interpretation these story elements are linked to certain archetypes that are familiar to the members of a group. An archetype is a generic, recognizable model of a person, event, or setting upon which other persons, events, and settings are patterned. During the process of interpretation members of a group seek to link story elements to these archetypes in order to place the new data within the framework of their larger cultural narrative.

3. Communication with locals is important to understand how events are being read
2. Story Forms

Story forms are recognizable patterns of storytelling that are easily comprehended because of their familiarity. An example of a common story form in American culture ‘rags to riches’ (an underdog pulls himself up by his bootstraps to attain a nearly insurmountable goal). Previous experience with this story form helps people easily understand new data by structuring it in the same manner.

3. Master Narratives

Master narratives are cross-cultural, already existing narratives deeply embedded in a group’s consciousness. These master narratives frequently reappear over time to provide an explanatory framework and refer to recurring patterns in the group’s shared past. Because they are deeply embedded and repeated in a multitude of texts and contexts, they are particularly powerful systems that shape opinion, perspective, and ideology. These three categories of narrative elements do not necessarily have to be linked or follow a specific order, but are simply ways of looking at the narrative from different perspectives. In order to illustrate how these narrative elements can exist within a specific culture, the figure shown above contains a collection of archetypes, story forms and master narratives generally found to be present in Iraqi culture.

The culture-specific narrative elements discussed here can also be found in the story about the U.S.-coalition forces inoculating cattle in Iraq. What led this event to be interpreted as an action of the U.S. army intended to destroy the land and livelihoods of the Iraqi people, are the patterns provided by a culture-specific narrative that was already familiar to the Iraqi people. The story elements show links to certain archetypes existing in Iraqi culture (villain, colonizer, crusader, victim); the story itself links up with familiar story forms (exploitation, invasion); and perhaps most importantly the story exhibited consistency with recognizable master narratives.

The Iraqi are familiar with their people’s long history of stories of foreign invaders pillaging Iraqi resources (Mongols, Crusaders et al.), and these master narratives functioned as a prime referential unit within their narrative.

In the Crusades, Westerners came, attacked, pillaged and destroyed; in the contemporary situation the stories such as the inoculation example imply that the United States came, attacked, pillaged, and destroyed. In short, the similarities these events hold with existing narratives circulating in Iraqi culture (and Arab and Islamic culture more broadly) gave the story its causal logic.

Understanding how events are ‘read’ from a certain group’s cultural perspective, could allow for a more accurate prediction of how military activities are likely to be interpreted by the local population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archetypes</th>
<th>Story Forms</th>
<th>Master Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tyrant</td>
<td>Invasion</td>
<td>Crusades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villain</td>
<td>Noble sacrifice</td>
<td>Colonization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusader</td>
<td>Reward / Deliverance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martyr</td>
<td>Subjugation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champion</td>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER III
Narrative Politics

Narratives are an important element to be considered in contemporary conflicts, as they can have a significant impact on the struggle for the consent of a contested population. The contested population in this case is the local, civilian population that resides politically and/or ideologically between different parties in a hegemonic struggle for dominance. In order to govern effectively, one side or the other has to win the support of this population. As a framework for understanding external data, narratives can motivate the contested population to support or dismiss top-down ideologies and framings of a conflict presented by the different parties. Gaining support of civilians can significantly determine the course of a conflict, as the party whose narrative comes to dominate public discourse can count on increased popular support for their purpose. This can lead to a so-called ‘battle of narratives’ or narrative politics, a process “marked by efforts by competing nations, coalitions, entities or ideologies to frame the context of a conflict in a manner that influences key audiences to foster support for their actions and political objectives at all levels” (Nissen, 2012).

Different parties can have interest in ‘winning over’ the population and promoting popular engagement in their narrative, as this promotes the legitimacy of their actions and ideology. Additionally, when a certain party’s narrative is accepted and internalized by a significant part of the contested population, it can motivate them to not only passively (give consent and legitimacy) but also actively become involved in their activities (e.g. support with resources, participate in actions). As a framework for understanding events they can function as a vehicle for ideologies, ideologies being the shared ideas or beliefs of a certain party that serve to justify and support their interests. Some of the societal beliefs that often surface in these ideologies are briefly described in figure [...] The societal beliefs that can be found in the story about the U.S.-led forces inoculating cattle are for example the self-victimization of the Iraqi people and the delegitimization of the U.S. army’s intentions to bring peace and stability. Narratives can communicate the societal beliefs stemming out of a certain ideology to their audience by emphasizing those characters, events and actions that demonstrate the coherence between these beliefs and actual events occurring in the ‘real world’. A dominant narrative thus guides ‘correct’ interpretation, and helps create coherence between a party’s ideology and the way their audience understands what is happening in the world around them. It also functions as a moral guide motivating the behavior of its followers, stimulating the population to not only adhere to the party’s ideology in thought, but also in their everyday activities or even in participation in violent struggle.

4. Propaganda is an important tool to influence narrative politics

Actors that can have an interest in gaining popular consent for their presence, activities and ideologies include the members of the conflicting parties, especially local leaders, mayors, religious leaders, the state, elders and politicians, but also third parties like educational institutions and the media can play a significant role in (unconsciously) solidifying an existing conflict narrative or creating a new one. Equally important to realize is that intervening parties such as IOs, NGOs and the military also have an interest in getting popular consent for their presence and activities. However, in order to gain this consent the party’s narrative has to resonate within the contested population. As we have seen in the previous chapters, events can be interpreted in a myriad ways, and this interpretation is to a large extent based on the culture-specific narrative elements that dominate the audience’s framework for understanding. Within a contested population different parties and their respective narratives struggle for dominance and aim to present a story in such a way that it works in favour of their narrative. What determines whether a party gains popu-
lar consent is then connected to the way their interpretation of events becomes accepted as truth by the local population. For a certain interpretation of events to resonate within the contested population it is therefore crucial that it plays into the cultural narrative elements (archetypes, story forms and master narratives) already existing in this population, making the interpretation credible and understandable.

Societal beliefs found in ideologies:

- The justness of own goals (outlining the goals in conflict, indicating their crucial importance, and providing their explanations and rationales)
- Security (personal safety and national survival and an outline of the conditions for their achievement)
- Positive collective self-image (attribution of positive traits, values, and behavior to own society)
- Self-victimization (self-presentation as a victim, especially in the context of the intractable conflict)
- Delegitimizing the opponent (beliefs that deny the adversary’s humanity)
- Patriotism (generating attachment to the country or society by propagating loyalty, care, and sacrifice)
- Unity (ignoring internal conflicts and disagreements to unite the forces in the face of external threat)
- Peace (referring to peace as the ultimate desire of society).

Bar-Tal, 2007

Figure 1: Societal beliefs found in ideologies

Chapter IV
Narrative and CIMIC

In the previous chapters of this article, the theoretical framework of the narrative concept has been discussed. Focus will now shift to why this concept is relevant for Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC), and to some first insights into how it can be applied in the context of military planning and assessment of activities. Understanding local narratives is an important step in bridging the divide between what the military is trying to communicate, and how it is interpreted by the affected population from their cultural perspective. The theoretical framework has discussed how narratives guide the process of interpreting events, and help people make sense of what is happening in the world around them. In an area of operations, ‘correct’ interpretation of military activities by the local population is often directly linked to the success of such an operation as it contributes to gaining popular consent. For this reason it is important to understand which local narratives are present before and during the implementation of military activities, and how these narratives impact the popular interpretation of the activities.

This article argues that obtaining a better understanding of narrative and its functions from a population-centric, cultural perspective is crucial, because it allows for a more accurate prediction of how military activities are likely to be interpreted by the local population. This is what makes the narrative concept relevant for CIMIC, because an important part of the tasks performed by CIMIC personnel is the collection and the communication of relevant information concerning the civil environment. CIMIC personnel is particularly apt to analyze local narratives as they are in close contact with the local population, and with this data they can provide valuable advice before and during the execution of military activities. CIMIC personnel contribute significantly to the planning process at all phases, in

\[3\]

In this publication the term ‘CIMIC personnel’ is being used to define the staff, field teams, and individual actors (both military and civil) who facilitate cooperation between a NATO commander and all parts of the civil environment within his Joint Area of Operations (JAO).
accordance with the NATO Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD) and the CIMIC Functional Planning Guide. The main products regarding this information exchange are the Theatre Civil Assessment (TCA), the Initial CIMIC Analysis (ICA), and the Full CIMIC Analysis (FCA). In order to provide a complete picture of what is the current situation among the local population, assessments of existing narratives and their functions must be included in these analyses.

But how can information be collected on local narratives, a topic so difficult to grasp due to its unconscious presence in thought and actions of the population? This section will further look into this topic by providing some preliminary questions one could pose regarding the narratives existing within the cultural fabric of the local population in order to support military activities. The main questions surrounding these topics have been divided into planning / pre-deployment considerations, and assessment / deployment considerations.

**Planning / Pre-deployment phase**

In relation to CIMIC, the operations planning process of NATO missions begins at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe), well in advance of a response to a crisis, in accordance with the CIMIC Functional Planning Guide (FPG). It primarily includes the development of information and knowledge requirements about the area of interest. During this initial planning phase, CIMIC will conduct and provide a Theatre Civil Assessment (TCA). This assessment examines all the civil conditions in the respective area of interest as they might affect a military engagement. Information forming the basis of this assessment should come from the widest range of sources.

The analysis is structured into the following domains: Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information and Infrastructure (PMESII). CIMIC personnel involved in this process have to apply analytical logic to determine what the factors they have found mean for possible engagement. The TCA is the basic document for all subsequent phases of the CIMIC planning process. It will also determine the critical issues for inclusion in the next phase of the planning process. In this phase of the operational planning process CIMIC should collect information on which narratives are present among the local population, and how can these possibly support or hamper the successful execution of the planned activity. Especially in the pre-deployment phase it is essential to determine those aspects that can have an impact on the success of a military mission. CIMIC personnel should aim to answer the following questions to provide an accurate and relevant analysis of local narratives concerning military activities:

1. **What will be the dominant interpretation of the activity from the cultural perspective of the population?**

   As we have seen in the previous sections actions and events can be interpreted in different ways by different audiences. Attention therefore should be paid to what is likely to be the dominant interpretation of a certain military activity among the local population from their cultural perspective, and whether this is similar to the message that the activity is trying to convey. A second question would then be if the dominant interpretation should be seen as a hindrance or a positive contribution to the success of the activity. It is important to note here that whether the dominant interpretation is true or not, or whether it makes sense to outsiders is of secondary importance. When analyzing the local population, the dominant perception is truth, and therefore should be taken serious as a factor able to significantly impact the successful execution of an activity.
2. What are the culture-specific narrative elements that might have an impact on the population's interpretation of the military activity?

As demonstrated by the second chapter, events are interpreted and patterned through the narrative elements (archetypes, story forms, master narratives) provided by the cultural background of the local population. By analyzing which narratives and narrative elements are present among the local population, it is possible to gain insight into how these will have an impact on their interpretation of the military activity.

3. What are the main sources providing information on what is going on?

In analyzing local narratives, it is important to map which sources of information are present among the local population. In an area of operations, the information environment is often filled with different, at times contradictory streams of information coming from different sources and informing the local population in various ways on what is going on. Information sources could be the national and local media (television, radio, newspapers, internet), the educational system, official state communication, politicians, religion, key leaders, the military itself, but also storytelling, everyday discourse and rumors, of which the sources are more difficult to track. All of these information sources can (intentionally or unintentionally) guide the local population into reading a military activity in a certain manner, which makes it relevant to analyze these sources and how they affect popular perception. Assessing these information sources links local narrative analysis to the Information domain of the PMESII model used to analyze the civil environment.

4. Which information gaps could appear by implementing a certain military activity, and how can these gaps best be filled?

Military activities should be implemented with clear, transparent, and culturally-attuned information provision to the local population, either directly or via key leaders. When this is not the case, information gaps can come into existence where uncertainty about the actions, motives, and/or goals behind these military activities exists. This uncertainty in turn can undermine the credibility of the military mission when these information gaps are being filled in a way that creates a negative picture of what is going on. The existence of different information sources spreading different information means that information gaps in military communication about activities can be filled by other information sources, which might not provide ‘correct’ information and in this way can impede the success of this activity. Narrative politics, as described in chapter III, demonstrates that these information gaps can be filled in by parties competing for popular consent to structure military activities in such a way that they are interpreted negatively by the local population. For this reason, it is important to strive for information saturation, by providing clear, consistent, and understandable information. CIMIC personnel should critically examine which possible information gaps can come into existence through the implementation of a certain activity, and how these information voids could best be filled in a culturally-attuned manner in order to foster popular consent.

5. Who are the key leaders (religious, political, etc.) that can have an impact on the narratives existing among the local population?

As can be concluded from the previous chapters, key leader analysis is essential to understand how existing narratives are spread, manipulated, and how they steer the process of interpretation of the local population. Narrative politics is the way in which different actors use a narrative to convey their ideology, defend their interests, and foster popular consent for their presence and activities. CIMIC personnel can collect information on who are the significant key leaders in a certain area, what are their motivations and interests, and how do they translate this in a narrative that resonates among the local population. A second step would then be to analyze how these key leaders respond to the military activity and whether and how they will guide the local population to follow them in their response by linking the activity to a larger narrative that is in line with the population’s cultural background. If key leaders take a negative stance regarding
the activity, then it is necessary to study how they legitimate this position to the population. If they are neutral or in support of the activity, then CIMIC personnel should look into possibilities how to gain popular consent via the narratives communicated by these actors as their narratives are often more culturally-attuned to the local population.

Assessment / Deployment phase

Conducting assessments on the existing narratives among the local population and how these narratives impact the way the population interprets events during the implementation of a military activity is indispensable. New developments should be taken into account, meaning that new assessments should be conducted whenever the situation asks for it in order to stay up-to-date. CIMIC personnel should therefore be attentive to possible shifts and new developments and should incorporate these in regularly updated assessments. Narrative analysis is a continuous process and the understanding of these narratives deepens as analysis continues and new insights are incorporated. Assessments in the deployment phase should therefore be built on the initial assessment from the pre-deployment phase, while at the same time providing enough room for possible new developments.

1. What is the dominant interpretation of the activity from the cultural perspective of the population?
   - What is the dominant reading of the military activity among the local population from their cultural perspective?
   - Is the dominant interpretation similar to the reading that the activity is trying to convey?
   - Is the dominant interpretation a hindrance or a positive contribution to the success of the activity?
   - Is the dominant interpretation stable or changing over time, and what might be the reasons for this stability or change to occur?

2. What are the culture-specific narrative elements that might have an impact on the population’s interpretation of the activity?
   - Which narrative elements (archetypes, story forms, master narratives) provided by the cultural background of the local population are present in the dominant reading of the activity?
   - How do these have an impact on the interpretation of the military activity?

3. What are the main sources providing information on what is going on?
   - Which information sources are providing information on the military activity?
   - In which ways do information sources inform the local population on what is going on, and what is the scale of their impact on popular interpretation?
   - How are these (intentionally or unintentionally) guiding the local population into reading a military activity in a certain manner?
   - Do these information sources change over time, do they increase or decrease in the scale of their impact, and if so, how can this be explained?

4. Which information gaps come into existence during the execution of a certain military activity, and how can these gaps best be filled?
   - Are there signs of existing information gaps about the actions, motives, and/or goals behind the military activity?
   - Are these information gaps being filled by alternative information sources; if so, in what way?
   - Does this impact the success of the activity in a positive or negative way?
   - What should be the advice of CIMIC personnel in order to achieve information saturation about the military activity among the local population?
   - How can information saturation be reached in a culturally-attuned manner that resonates among the local population?
5. **Who are the key leaders that can have an impact on the narratives existing among the local population?**

- Who are the relevant key leaders that have an impact on the local narratives?
- What are their motivations and interest? How do they translate these in a narrative that resonates among the local population?
- Are there new important actors or parties that become involved during the deployment phase?
- How do these key leaders respond to the military activity and how do they possibly guide the local population to follow them in their response?
- Do they make use of a larger narrative that is in line with the population's cultural background in order to make the narrative resonate among the local population?
- If key leaders take a negative stance regarding the activity, then how do they legitimize this position to the population?
- If they are neutral or in support of the activity, how can these actors be involved in order to gain popular consent via the narratives communicated by these actors?

By utilizing the abovementioned considerations concerning the local narrative, CIMIC personnel should be able to analyze and give advice on how military activities will be and are interpreted by the local population from their cultural perspective. However, in order to obtain this knowledge, we cannot depend solely on analysis and data gathering by CIMIC personnel, but close cooperation and information sharing with other branches as well as non-military actors should be established and maintained. Understanding narratives is not a straightforward process but needs continuous reflection and monitoring as the concept itself is dynamic and constantly evolving under the influence of internal and external factors.

Important to realize is that CIMIC personnel should limit themselves to gathering data on the local narratives, and on passing on this information to other branches who can then use it in support of the mission. CIMIC personnel should not primarily aim to change the narrative actively! This is crucial as their position is mainly to establish and maintain close contact with local civil actors, which means that they have to win their trust and cooperation. Being involved in changing narratives and actively influencing the local population will not contribute to CIMIC’s credibility as a trustworthy and reliable partner. While CIMIC personnel should not be involved in actively influencing the population, it is at the same time unavoidable to not have a passive impact on these narratives. Through cooperation with local civil actors they expose themselves to the local population and even without direct interaction the population will incorporate their presence in the way they interpret what they see and hear. Close attention should therefore be paid to the impact CIMIC personnel has on the narratives existing among the local population, and whether or not this is in line with what they are trying to communicate as part of the military mission more generally.

6. Sharing the narrative, not changing it
In 2009, the CIMIC section of the Hungarian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was approached by an influential local police chief with the request to build a mosque in the area in which the PRT was located. This request was not granted immediately, because there was a lot of doubt within the PRT about what the reaction of the local population would be with regard to the question if the military should build a mosque or not. In general, the team felt it would be unwise to interfere with religious matters as this could be seen as imposing on local culture and traditions and would not be perceived as positive by the local population. This put the head of the Hungarian CIMIC section in a difficult situation, because he was not sure how the population would interpret the possibility of the PRT building a mosque. His biggest concern was that the local population could possibly see it as an attempt of the military to change their religion or to exercise control over it. The head of the Hungarian CIMIC team therefore came to the conclusion that it would be unwise to help build a mosque. Nonetheless, the police chief continued to insist on the construction of a mosque. Therefore, an initial inquiry was made among interpreters, the police chief, the mullah and the local actors, to see how they thought the local population would interpret and react to the activity, e.g. what would be the possible consequences. These ‘inside’ advisors generally indicated that they expected the population to respond in a grateful manner and see the mosque as a positive gesture of the NATO forces. He made sure to get the message across that he did not wanted to change their religion, and in this way filled possible information gaps that left room for alternative interpretations. In the end, in contrary to previous doubts, the activity was executed and the mosque was built. This led to a prosperous relationship with the police chief, and indirectly with the local population as the police chief guided the interpretation process of the local population by providing information on the military activity in such a way that it resonated with the cultural background of the population. In the abovementioned case, the doubts experienced by the head of the Hungarian CIMIC section demonstrate his understanding of the culture-specific narrative elements existing among the local population. He understood the possibility of how this narrative could guide the population into seeing the military activity as a confirmation of the negative archetypical role of converters, westerners, crusaders often assigned to the military in that region. By taking this culture-specific narrative into consideration, he realized that it was necessary to set out an inquiry to find out if it would have a negative impact on the popular consent for the execution of the activity. Additionally, he made an assessment of possible information gaps that could come into existence, and made sure to fill these gaps in a culturally-attuned manner (both through direct communication and via the police chief). Overall, this example is a clear demonstration of how CIMIC personnel can perform local narrative analysis, and why it is essential for the successful execution of a military project.
CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this article has been to contribute to the current discourse on narrative by exploring the following two questions: (1) how can the narrative concept be understood from a cultural, population-centric point of view? And (2) in which ways is the narrative concept relevant for CIMIC personnel? The first three chapters have discussed the first question by describing the narrative concept as both a system of interrelated stories and as a framework for understanding events that is anchored in the cultural fabric of the local population. By using the example of the U.S. Army veterinarians supposedly poisoning the cattle, this article has demonstrated the way narratives link contemporary events to the cultural background of the population through the culture-specific narrative elements (archetypes, story forms, master narratives) that give these events a causal logic.

The link between narratives and the cultural background of the local population becomes important when different parties are participating in a struggle for popular consent. In this context, competing parties make an effort to frame a conflict in such a way that the local population will support their actions and presence. In order to obtain this popular consent these parties (consciously or unconsciously) play into the cultural narrative elements existing among the local population in such a way that the narrative comes across as credible and logical. In the context of a military mission, it is crucial to understand the narrative concepts and its implications such as framing and narrative politics in order to better understand how a local population interprets and responds to military activities. This is what makes the narrative concept relevant for CIMIC personnel (question 2) as part of their tasks is the collection and communication of relevant information concerning the civil environment. CIMIC personnel should therefore enhance their contribution to the planning and coordination of military activities by providing local narrative analyses before and during the execution of these activities.

Performing local narrative analysis brings us a step further in understanding the local population in the military area of operations. However, further in-depth research is needed to effectively connect the theoretical base of this concept to a practice-oriented guide describing how to gather information on local narratives from a cultural perspective so that it can be used to improve a mission. Due to time-constraints this publication was unable to look into this more deeply, for which reason the following section will provide a set of recommendations.

Recommendations

➢ Further research is needed on the link between the narrative concept and CIMIC. This study has been an exploratory research into what the relevance can be for CIMIC in understanding local narratives from a cultural perspective. Chapter four discussed this relevance by providing insights into how local narrative analysis can be conducted by CIMIC personnel in order to provide advice during the planning, execution and assessment of military activities. Future research should focus on developing a more practice-oriented ‘local narrative analysis tool’ that guides CIMIC personnel in conducting these analyses.

➢ Further research needs to be conducted on how local narrative analysis by CIMIC personnel can and should be used to inform the creation of the military mission / institutional narrative, and the communication of this narrative to one of its target audiences: the local population.

➢ Further research needs to be conducted on how local narrative analysis links CIMIC to other information-related branches and activities such as Information Operations, Strategic Communication, Psychological Operations, Key Leader Engagement, and Human Intelligence. Local narrative analysis is an important tool providing data to be incorporated in the analysis of the information environment. Knowledge exchange and complementary knowledge development among these related branches on a methodological level concerning local narrative analysis will contribute to better coordination of activities concerning this topic and subsequently the military mission. Knowledge exchange among these related branches in the context of executing military activities will contribute to a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the operational environment and its local population.
LITERATURE / FURTHER READING


PICTURE REFERENCES


CCOE’s New Media Approach

The CIMIC Centre of Excellence (CCOE) is in the process to extend and facilitate our Community of Interest (CoI) by utilizing several internet new media possibilities.

Our goal is to integrate these tools in such a way that it will:

- facilitate functional discussion
- boost sharing of resources, lessons learned, best practices, insights
- intensifying knowledge development
- building relationships and networking
- foster collaboration and establish an effective Community of Interest

Our community is on purpose aimed on both military and civilian participants interested in Civil Military Interaction (CMI) and you are kindly invited to take part in this effort. The CCOE role will be mainly to facilitate and initiate. But that alone would not create an effective community, we need your contribution. Your role might be as a moderator of a topic, taking part in discussions, sharing insights and resources or only consuming our information. Please feel all welcome in your Community and start to collaborate today.

The central hub in your community is and still will be the CCOE –website.
It will deliver its function as the CCOE news portal, CCOE scope area, the CIMIC Course landscape, internship announcements and last but least lots of Resources.

The website will be strengthened and illustrated by the following new media tools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a CMiPedia; a Wiki using mediawiki software that will function as your vocabulary covering a range of CIMIC and CMI topics, forming a dynamic, rich up-to-date and living source of information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Diigo; a Bookmarking or Favorites program offering your discussion forum on new entries to relevant internet sources, showing new entries on several website pages, and allow access to a cloud based repository searchable on keywords (or tags).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUU; a web based publication site for all our publications in electronic format and embedded in our website.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn; a professional network community effective networking within your community, facilitating a discussion forum and advertising CCOE products and services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flickr; a photo collection, galleries for all your community pictures to be shared, searchable on keywords (or tags) displayed on a map</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All changes on the website and discussions can be followed by RSS feed and important changes will be disseminated via CCOE Twitter as well.

Additionally we will disseminate all our courses and publications via ReliefWeb.

On the worldwide Wikipedia CCOE will try to dominate some selected main topics.

So feel kindly invited to join in order to foster strengthen the (your) community of interest.
CCOE’s Advanced Cultural Approach.

At CCOE we believe that operations are both kinetic and non-kinetic. To facilitate this holistic view for the military the CCOE follows academic anthropological models and incorporates all relevant sectors of any society, as well as all influence factors to this society, which the military forces need to understand and imply in their planning and execution to enable success in Missions.

CCOE looks at the society divided into five segments:

- Physical dimension
- Economic dimension
- Social dimension
- Political dimension
- Identity dimension

CCOE aims for making the importance of understanding the culture in a mission understood. Resulting from that it is a part of our program to publish easy guidelines for each single segment, if not covered in other publications or doctrines. CCOE publishes the “….Makes Sense. A way to improve your mission” publications.

Recently we published two new publications: Rule of Law and Gender Makes Sense.

You will find more on our publications on the CCOE-website.

Any comments or suggestions to this information leaflet? Would you like to contribute an article?
Please contact us! Tel.: +31 534 80 3400
Central Registry CCOE: registry@cimic-coe.org
Public Affairs Officer : pao@cimic-coe.org

www.cimic-coe.org