

Relating Values to Military Styles, Force Protection, and Operational Goals

Marinus van Driel

Directorate of Research



DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH

Directed by Dr. Daniel P. McDonald, Director of Research

Technical Report # 08-12

Abstract

Values constitute a powerful contextual force that has far reaching effects. Based on the observations of Soeters et al. (2006) as well as Grojean & Thomas (2006), it is evident that values can shape international collaboration, mission execution, and inter-organization cooperation as well as the assumptions and expectations of personnel. This paper explores how an understanding of value structures impact individuals as well as organizations, and is critical to successful leadership in military contexts.

Values are arguably one of the most impactful factors that drive intercultural and organizational interactions. Values constitute an important antecedent to how members of different cultural groups conceptualize and approach events (Soeters, Poponete, & Page, 2006). Furthermore, values are a powerful contextual force that shapes organizational functioning (Grojean & Thomas, 2006). Each culture, organization, and individual has a set of values (House et al., 2004; Schwartz, 2006).

When values are understood and leveraged successfully, positive outcomes are more easily attained by organizations and individuals alike. For instance, military organizations can better interact when similarities and differences in terms of assumptions and standard codes of conduct as predicated by values are understood (Soeters et al., 2006). Additionally, military service members function better in organizations with values that are congruent with their own (Grojean & Thomas, 2006).

Defining Values

Hofstede (1980) defines values as “a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others” (p.18), while Rokeach (1973) defines a value as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (p.5). A related definition is offered by Schwartz (1994, 2006), who describes values as guiding principles in people’s lives.

Despite the small differences in these definitions of values, most researchers agree that values have valences and can vary in intensity. That is, people’s values can differ in their direction, and in the degree to which people subscribe to them. Furthermore, researchers also agree that values serve as standards for both judgment and justification of actions (Grojean & Thomas, 2006).

Beyond these basic attributes of values, values researchers have found that values are related to the social processes within teams (Chen, Brockner, & Katz, 1998; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Halevy & Sagiv, 2008), leadership within organizations (House et al., 1999), and that values can be detected at multiple levels of analysis, including that of the individual, team, organization, and culture (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 1999; Schwarz, 1994). It has also been noted that cultural values can be linked to aircraft accidents (Hofstede, 1991), and—more to the point of the current discussion—to national styles in fighting, warring, and controlling foreign occupied areas (Soeters et al., 2006).

To expand on this perspective, the remainder of this paper is dedicated to discussing two of the most noteworthy reviews regarding the relevancy of values to military operations. The first review provided by Soeters et al. (2006) describes how cultural values are related to national styles of dealing with military conflicts and discusses the implications of these observations in terms of force protection, military styles, and operational goals. The second review, provided by Grojean and Thomas (2006), offers a discussion on how values are related to the performance of service members.

Relating Values to National styles of Dealing with Conflict

Soeters et al. (2006) point out that there is a supranational set of values that are reflected in militaries around the world. In the military contexts referenced, including those of Italy, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and Norway, these values reflect a higher level of hierarchy and power differentials as well as higher levels of interdependence.

Despite these similarities, militaries around the world also differ quite substantially in terms of their culturally derived values. Such value differences are evident in the different levels

of hierarchy, the need for formal rules, and power differentials, as expressed in different military forces (Page, 2003; Soeters et al., 2006; Soeters & Recht, 2001).

These differences in cultural values are related to a number of military-related phenomena such as the amount of forceful pressure that is exerted to resolve conflicts. Some countries rely on political resolutions of conflict, while others rely more heavily on the use of military force to solve internal conflicts. For instance, Belgium has pursued political resolution in terms of the conflict between its ethnically French and Flemish populations while military action was used to resolve similar issues in countries like the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and Iraq.

Similarly, cultural values can also be related to the methods used by countries to gain international influence and resolve conflicts beyond their borders. Notably, during colonial times, the Dutch have commonly used trade and economic development to gain influence (Voorhoeve, 1979), while the British and the French were known for their use of force to achieve similar aims (Soeters et al., 2006).

Implications for the Military

Soeters et al. (2006) argue that cultural values have a tremendous impact on the working styles of the militaries of different countries. To motivate this observation, they point out that Turkish and British officers want to be addressed by their subordinates in a completely different manner than Dutch or Danish officers, with the former officers expecting deference and respect from their subordinates, while the latter officers expect collegiality from their subordinates. They also point out that officers in the Turkish, British, and German militaries do not tolerate contradiction by their subordinates, while their Dutch and Danish counterparts expect open communication and consultation with their subordinates as a matter of course (Duine, 1998).

Furthermore, at the cultural level of analysis, the style of militaries can be mapped in accordance with value structures such as those of Hofstede (1980). For instance, one of the cultural value dimensions described by Hofstede, masculinity (referring to an orientation toward accomplishing achievement at all costs), can be related to more robust military action. As examples, Soeters et al. (2006) cite the use of force to achieve operational goals by American, British, and Australian forces in places like Iraq, the Falklands, and East Timor. They place these observations in contrast with the more feminine cultural values of countries like the Netherlands, whose military forces more commonly operate on the premises of consensus, consultation, and compromise to achieve their operational goals.

These observations indicate that when the militaries of different countries are required to serve together in multinational military operations there may be some disparities in terms of the value orientations that, in turn, may result in substantial operational and organizational challenges. The biggest of these challenges is the adherence to specific and unique national lines of command and policies rather than capitulating to the norms established within the multinational force.

Examples of instances where problems due to difference in cultural values were detected are plentiful in the military literature. One example offered by Soeters et al. (2006) was obtained during the joint peacekeeping operations in the Kosovo conflict of the 1990s. During this conflict, members of the Dutch and Turkish forces were required to cooperate under Dutch command. The Turkish commanding officers balked at the notion of receiving orders from Dutch superiors and often conferred with their own superiors within the conflict region as well as at home in Turkey before they made decisions. This resulted in inefficiencies, frustration, and poor execution of the mission.

Another example referenced by Soeters et al. (2006) stems from observations made in Camp Warehouse in Kabul, Afghanistan, during the International Security Force Assistance Force (ISAF) operation. In this camp, members of different countries' military services were required to live and work in close proximity. As is commonly experienced in such a setting, minor conflicts regarding acceptable behavior, noise levels, the use of alcohol, food, leadership styles, and safety matters were common. These conflicts, even in a camp as small as that of the ISAF, had the net impact of causing the members of different countries' military services to isolate themselves while marginalizing the members of other militaries represented in the camp (Soeters & Moelker, 2003).

Soeters et al. (2006) describe a number of actions that are available to members of military services to cope with these types of conflicts. As an organizing framework of these actions, these authors refer to John Berry's (2004) acculturation model. The first option within the Berry framework is that of assimilation. This is a desirable course of action when other cultural groups are deemed to be outstanding and maintaining identity is not a prominent concern. By assimilating, one group becomes similar to another. Commonly, this is the expectation of a larger contingent in multinational peacekeeping forces such as that of the United States in Afghanistan. This expectation does not pose a problem as long as the smaller forces are not opposed to the idea of assimilation. If they are, as previously discussed, other strategies may be more effective (Soeters et al., 2006).

According to the Berry (2004) framework, *separation* and *mutual accommodation* are two other potential solutions. Separation involves the distribution of responsibilities and functions of military services in a non-overlapping way. Soeters et al. (2006) point out that this was the strategy that was behind the division of national contingents' responsibilities according

to geographical regions. Conversely, mutual accommodation involves the synergistic combination of all military services into a cohesive whole that is more than its constituent parts. This is the ideal solution; however, for this to be possible power should be balanced and people should be adept at working within inter-cultural environments.

Based on this discussion, it is evident that values can have a fundamental impact on how members of different militaries pursue their operational goals, as well as how members of different military organizations cooperate.

Relating values to military performance

On a more granular level, values can also be related to the performance of military personnel, according to Grojean and Thomas (2006). These authors contend that values at both the organizational and individual levels of analysis have a direct bearing on a variety of outcomes within the military context.

Specifically, Grojean and Thomas (2006) argue that values at both the individual and organizational level of analysis may impact the socialization of military members into new organizations. If the military members can fit into the new organization, they will attain specific role identities (i.e., they will be able to determine proper behaviors, salient value orientations, relevant attitudes in specific situations; Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 1999). Otherwise, they will likely leave their organization. Similarly, if role identities can be attained, a host of positive outcomes are argued to precipitate, including mastery of specific tasks, the attainment of collective efficacy within the organization, organizational cohesion, and commitment to the organization and its goals. In turn, these outcomes are related to the task performance and contextual performance of individual service members.

Task performance is reflected by behaviors that are associated with the accomplishment of the fundamental aspects of work. Formally, task performance is broadly defined as activities that “contribute to an organization’s technical core [that is the process by which raw materials are converted into organizational products] ...directly by implementing a part of its technological processes, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials” (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p 73). In contrast to task performance, contextual performance is defined as pro-social behaviors, such as helping others and persevering with extra effort (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). These behaviors do not directly contribute to organizations’ technical core, but are instead oriented to supporting the organizational, “social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function” (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p 73). Furthermore, unlike task performance, contextual performance is not job specific. In other words, the behaviors that comprise contextual performance are common to many jobs (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

The following figure illustrates the process as described by Grojean and Thomas (2006):

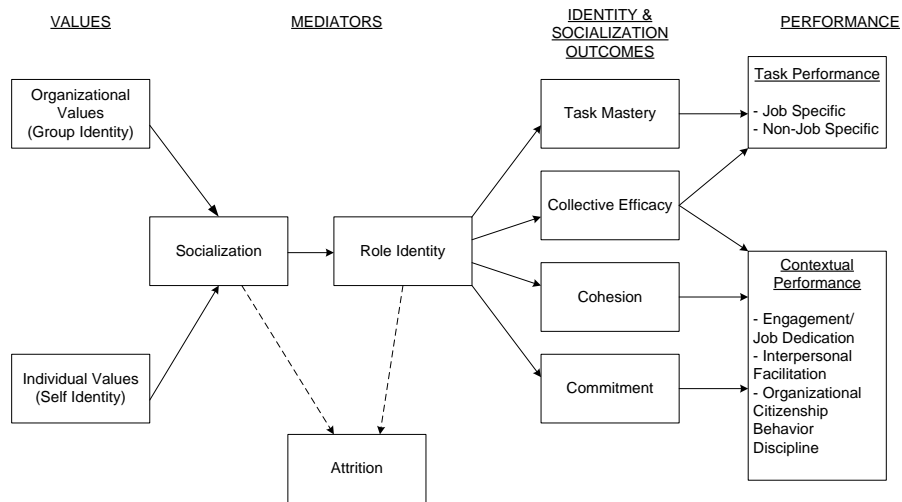


Figure 1. Values to Performance Model (Grojean & Thomas, 2006)

According to this model, it is evident that individual values interact with those of organizations to shape an individual's work-related performance. Although the linkage between values and work performance is mediated by other factors, it is important to consider how organizational values can contribute to the effective socialization of military service members, and thereby facilitate their successful functioning. These observations correspond to the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Framework (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995).

The ASA framework indicates that people are differentially attracted to organizations based on what they value in terms of a work environment. Furthermore, the ASA theory contends that individuals that best fit with internal organizational environments are selected by organizations and that individuals who determine they do not fit with organizations' internal environments tend to leave. Collectively, these observations indicate that values of individuals and organizations interact dynamically to facilitate performance of both individuals and organizations.

Conclusion

Values constitute a powerful contextual force that has far-reaching effects. Based on the observations of Soeters et al. (2006), it is evident that values can shape international collaboration, mission execution, and inter-organization cooperation as well as the assumptions and expectations of personnel. By extension, values clashes or ill-understood values of partners can contribute to poor collaboration, failed missions, and inter-organizational strife.

On a more molar level, values can also influence how organizational members perform their work and whether they choose to commit to military service as a long-term career.

Therefore, it is critical to understand and align individual service members' and organizational values as a means by which to maximize performance and retention of personnel.

Understanding value structures and how values impact individuals as well as organizations is critical to successful leadership in any organizational context. However, the importance of this understanding is amplified in contexts, such as those where military action is involved, where value conflicts can lead to the loss of life or the successful resolution of armed conflicts.

References

- Berry, J. W. (2004). Fundamental psychological processes in intercultural relations. In D. Landis, J. M. Bennett, and M. J. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (3rd ed., pp 166-184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds.), *Personnel selection in organizations* (pp. 71-98). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Chen, Y. R., Brockner, J., & Katz, T. (1998). Toward an explanation of cultural differences in in-group favoritism: The role of individual versus collective primacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 1490-1502.
- Duine, J. (1998). Werken en leven in HQ SFOR (Working and living in HQ SFOR). *Militaire Spectator*, 167, 451-455.
- Gelfand, M., Erez, M., & Aycan, Z. (2006). Cross-cultural organization psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 479-514.
- Grojean, M. J., & Thomas, J. L. (2006). From values to performance: It's the journey that changes the traveler. In T. W. Britt, A. B. Adler, & C. A. Castro (Eds.), *Military Life: The psychology of serving in peace combat* (pp. 35-59). Westport, CT: PraegerHalevy & Sagiv. (2008).
- Hofstede, G. H. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. London: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. H. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. McGraw-Hill: New York, NY.

- House, R. J., Hanges, P. W., Ruiz-Quintanilla, S. A., Dorfman, P., Javidan, M., & Dickson, M., et al. (1999). Cultural influences on leadership and organizations: Project GLOBE. In William H. Mobley (Ed.), *Advances in global leadership* (Vol. 1, pp. 215-254). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., and Gupta V. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Leonard, N. H., Beauvais, L. L., & Scholl, R. W. (1999). Work motivation: the incorporation of self-concept-based processes, *Human relations*, 42, 970-998.
- Paige, R. M., Jacobs-Cassuto, M., Yershova, Y. A., & DeJaeghere, J. (2003). Assessing intercultural sensitivity: An empirical analysis of the Hammer and Bennett Intercultural Development Inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 467-486.
- Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology*, 40, 437-453.
- Schneider, B., Goldstein, H. W. & Smith, D. B. (1995). The ASA framework: An update. *Personnel Psychology*, 48, 747-779.
- Schwarz, S. H. (1994). Are there universal aspects in the structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 50, 19-45.
- Schwartz, S. H. (2006). Value orientations: Measurement, antecedents and consequences across nations. In R. Jowell, C. Roberts, R. Fitzgerald, & G. Eva (Eds.), *Measuring attitudes cross-nationally - lessons from the European Social Survey*. London: Sage.
- Soeters, J., & Moelker, R. (2003). German-Dutch cooperation in the heat of Kabul. In G. Kummel and S. Colmer (Eds.), *Soldat-Militar-Politik-Gesellschaft* (pp. 63-75). Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos.
- Soeters, J., & Recht, R. (2001). Culture and discipline in military academies: An international comparison. *Journal of Political and military Sociology*, 26, 169-189.

Soeters, J., Poponete, C. R., & Page, J. T., Jr. (2006). Culture's consequences in the military. In T. W.

Britt, A. B. Adler, & C. A. Castro (Eds.), *Military Life: The psychology of serving in peace combat*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Voorhoeve, J. C (1979). *Peace, profits and principles: A study of Dutch foreign policy*. The Hague,

Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.