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Nearly all kinds of operations in the spectrum of conflict involve exerting influence across a cultural boundary. Part of accomplishing this influence almost always involves putting some military personnel from one culture on the other side of a cultural boundary.

During my recent deployment to Mosul, Iraq, I provided pastoral care to 39 different small teams of Americans in 15 different locations who were advising senior leaders in Iraqi police, military, and border enforcement units. I lived on an Iraqi Army base with some of these teams. The guards on our compound gates were not Americans. They were Iraqis. When the soldiers for whom I cared rolled out on missions, they went embedded in Iraqi units and not with other Americans.

I quickly discovered that teams of advisors went through common stages of adjustment. Different levels of influence resulted from how they negotiated these stages. These stages are inevitable and normal. They are predictable, like stages of grief after losing a loved one. This article explains: 1) what the stages are, 2) why they exist, and 3) how to find healthy roles for achieving influence.

### **Stages of Adjustment to Immersion**

#### ***Orientation***

In the orientation phase of adjusting to being immersed in a foreign context, you learn in controlled settings and experience only artificial representations. This stage features anticipation and excitement. In it you do all the research that you can. You gain some familiarity with the language, clothes, and food. You learn from a distance. You accumulate knowledge that is screened through others rather than from direct experience. The most important thing about this stage is that you develop expectations and assumptions. Rigid and unrealistic expectations will set you up for a difficult adjustment and perhaps failure. It will help if you can accept that you will inevitably face some later disappointments.

#### ***Tourist***

In the tourist stage you are embedded in the host context—and you are learning rapidly from

firsthand experience. You make some mistakes, and you sometimes get lost and confused, but your hosts are forgiving, and you are emotionally stimulated by the adventure. You experience uncomfortable twinges that are warnings of disappointments yet to come, but naiveté and denial keep your outlook positive and expectations high.

### ***Disillusionment***

Sooner or later, usually before the end of six months, everyone hits bottom. Emotional highs must come down. When they do, feelings of isolation, frustration, and being unappreciated reinforce the emotional let down to create disillusionment. Missionaries and diplomats call it “culture shock.” No one is exempt. Everyone goes through it. People vary only by degrees. Accepting this reality will help you get through it.

### ***Resolution***

From this third stage, you can go in one of three directions to find resolution. The one you choose depends upon how secure you are in your personal identity and how you cope with ethical dilemmas. The three choices are withdrawal, going native, and engagement. Before I reflect on these, I need to clarify identity and values.

## **Identity and Values**

### ***Values***

All societies share basic values, but many of them also prioritize those values differently. Do the priorities of values come from society, or do those priorities fundamentally shape the society? Are some priorities of values better than others?

You should avoid the temptation to answer these questions. When you operate as an advisor to people in another social context, you will inevitably experience a crisis of identity coming from

a challenge to the way that you sort your values. How you recover from culture shock and whether or not you can effectively advise depends upon how securely you can maintain your own identity while simultaneously communicating within the other social environment.

Two dynamics will help us to understand identity and values better. First, what people are willing to die for usually reveals their highest values. Second, how people handle ethical dilemmas usually reveals the priorities they set for their values.

### ***Highest Values***

Freedom is one of America's highest values. Patrick Henry's famous statement made in the days of the American Revolutionary War: "Give me liberty or give me death!" gloriously captures American sentiment regarding this value.

In Iraqi society, Arabs generally do not risk their lives for freedom. Iraqi citizens rarely risk their lives to give information that could liberate their neighborhoods from intimidating insurgent leaders.

Honor, in the sense of reputation, is the comparably high value for which Arabs are willing to sacrifice their lives. Honor is not a very high American value. Americans routinely humiliate elected officials with language and cartoons, and they tolerate blasphemous movies about Jesus even when they are highly offended, but just try circulating a caricature of Mohammad and see what happens.

### ***Ethical Dilemmas***

Ethical dilemmas occur when a situation demands a choice between two dearly held values. Hence, ethical dilemmas reveal a person's priorities concerning values. Telling the truth is important in Western society. However, in Holland during Nazi occupation, many Dutch families hid Jews in their homes. Then, when SS soldiers knocked at their doors, they lied. Telling the truth wasn't as important as preserving the lives of those Jews. The American Army demands soldiers give truthful reports to their superiors while simultaneously deceiving the enemy.

Apparently, telling the truth, even for American service personnel, sometimes depends upon the situation.

Here are some ways that ethical dilemmas reveal different values priorities between Americans and Iraqis:

### ***Integrity vs. Honor***

Most Americans will sacrifice honor (reputation) to preserve integrity. Most Iraqis will sacrifice integrity to preserve their and their family's honor.

The American legend about George Washington chopping down the cherry tree, and how he told the truth even at great risk to his posterior dignity, underscores the relative positions of these values in American society. Sure, we tell white lies to keep from hurting someone's feelings ("No, you don't look fat in that dress."), but our whole legal and economic system relies upon the principle that you don't tell lies just to make yourself look good.

If you ask Iraqis a question that will embarrass them, or their family, or their tribe, or their leader, then they will lie to you to preserve honor. Asking an embarrassing question is more offensive than telling the honor-preserving lie.

In Indonesia I was a university professor of English language. The school had a rule that cheating was not allowed. Anyone caught cheating would automatically fail the course. When I gave my first mid-term exam my students were cheating like crazy. They boldly copied from neighbors and smuggled notes. When I asked other professors if their students cheated they all told me, "No." With apparent sincerity they said, "We don't allow cheating, and if anyone gets caught they fail the course." But when I observed them giving exams, their students were boldly cheating just like mine. They weren't only lying to me; they were allowing their students to cheat.

I discovered it was a greater social offense to embarrass a student by accusing him of cheating than it was for the student to cheat. Eventually, I found a way to stop cheating in my classroom.

I never accused students of cheating. I would accuse them of not following directions, and the penalty was score reduction by a letter grade. The accusation and consequence to a student for making an “honest mistake” was socially acceptable enough that I could use it to stop students from cheating.

### ***Service vs. Status***

Americans tend to respect service more than status, but Iraqis usually respect status more than service.

In America we call elected officials “civil servants,” and we rank government employees according to their GS level, where GS stands for “government service.” We expect people in public service to earn less than their counterparts in the private sector, and we respect them for that sacrifice. The mechanic who works on our car may get more respect than the lawyer on the city council based upon the quality of the service he performs. In America, respect gets earned with service. In Iraq, respect gets ascribed according to status, and serving brings dishonor.

Iraqi society reverses the role of government from servant to served. Iraqi government workers, tribal leaders, and military commanders are patrons. Those beneath them are clients. Patrons are people of status. Their clients have a duty to give them honor but not necessarily service. In return, the patron cares for the clients. Allowing the patron to be above the law is one way to increase both status and potential to reward clients. Calling a patron out on corruption offends honor and reduces ability to care for clients. As long as a patron is caring for rather than exploiting clients, then corruption is overlooked. Corruption becomes noticed when it becomes exploitation.

The laws by which we as Americans hold Iraqi leaders to be corrupt are, to many Iraqis, like the anti-piracy laws that we choose to ignore so that soldiers can buy the latest movies in the *haji* shops outside the Exchange. Soldiers, to Americans, are people of honor. Commanders “look the other way” and allow soldiers to be above this law as long as they don’t exploit it to the point of serious economic harm.

### ***Struggle vs. Submission***

Americans demonstrate their faith by struggling to overcome adversity, while Iraqis demonstrate their spirituality by submitting to fate.

When Jesus calmed the storm, fed the hungry, and healed the sick, he gave to his followers, and eventually to Western civilization, the perspective that struggling against natural disasters, poverty, and sickness, is within God's will. Before that time, general public opinion considered that disasters, poverty, and sickness were a judgment from God, so that struggling to overcome these would be resisting his will. Medical science, relief and development, natural disaster prediction and risk management have reached their zenith in Western civilization, where it is good and holy to struggle against abhorrent natural and social conditions. No one does international aid and disaster assistance better than America. No military does force protection, risk management, and medical evacuation better than America's. For Americans, to struggle in these areas is consistent with their divine calling.

Iraqis have missed the heritage that comes to Western civilization from the example of Jesus. The word Islam actually means "submission." You will not find Iraqis struggling with the same level of intensity as Americans for cutting edge medical care, preparing for natural disasters, or relief and development of disadvantaged communities. Doing so actually risks interfering with the will of God. Too much attention to detail in force protection and risk management actually appears like rebellion. The phrase, "*Insha Allah*" – "if God wills," uttered to an advisor by a soldier when that soldier is scolded for not wearing body armor, illustrates how the soldier considers that wearing the body armor might actually be an act of rebellion against the will of God.

When compared to Iraqis, Americans are always striving, struggling, and resisting as opposed to relaxing, resting, and accepting. Each feels superior to the other in the way that they are responding to outward circumstances according to their hierarchy of values.

### ***Repentance vs. Retribution***

The American heritage offers forgiveness for repentance, while the Iraqi heritage provides forgiveness after payment.

The American ideal of forgiveness is bonded to the condition of an offender being truly sorry. The American justice system still punishes people for their crimes, no matter how penitent they may be, but Americans in their personal relationships value forgiving offenders based upon a sincere apology and the promise to change. In the American concept of personal reconciliation, a promise of change is completely sufficient for extending forgiveness. When Americans say they are sorry their ancestors went on Crusades against the Middle East, then they expect to be forgiven based upon the fact that they are different than their ancestors and they certainly aren't going to do the Crusades again.

From the Iraqi hierarchy of values, the American ideal seems like a miscarriage of justice. An apology, especially a sincere one, is an admission of guilt. A condition of true apology is willingness to make reparations. Without the payment of an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth, justice is not done, and forgiveness is not possible. Iraqis will not admit guilt unless they are ready and able to make reparations, so you won't find many making apologies. From the Iraqi perspective, apologizing for the Crusades admits guilt and creates an expectation that retribution will be accepted. When those apologizing do not submit and when they offer no reparations, the apology is taken to be insincere and just another example of duplicity.

### ***Individualism vs. Dependency***

American society prizes rugged individualism. Americans raise children to leave the proverbial "nest" and establish their own nuclear families that serve as the building blocks for American society. In America, children who live with their parents as adults endure ridicule and scorn.

Most of the world, however, socializes children into dependence upon extended families. Most Middle Eastern children wouldn't dream of choosing careers or marriage partners independent of extended family approval or even selection. In Iraq, children who assert personal independence in everything from marriage and politics to religion are the ones who endure ridicule, scorn, and even threats on their lives.

In Iraq, extended families use connections and influence to obtain jobs and careers for relatives. Assisted relatives are then expected to channel material benefit back to their extended families. Family obligations trump obligations to employers. What we call nepotism becomes expected etiquette (like standing on a crowded bus so a pregnant woman can be seated) affecting both the survival and dignity of the entire extended family. As a result, supplies like blankets and winter clothes, if issued to soldiers for enhancing their quality-of-life and

performance, often end up back in the hometown instead of at the combat outpost. As a result, the supply system resists issuing life support necessities to soldiers. Supervisors stockpile supplies and skim portions to benefit their extended relations. Even local hire interpreters on U.S. military outposts hoard what they perceive to be excessive and expendable life support items to take home to their families.

### ***Public vs. Private Space***

Filth in Iraq's public places frustrates American soldiers and depresses embedded advisors. Americans highly value the cleanliness and appearance of public spaces. They manicure suburban lawns, sweep city streets, and clean public restrooms more frequently than they clean their private ones. Relatively speaking, Americans place lower value on the cleanliness and appearance of private spaces. They wear shoes in their houses, pile dirty dishes in kitchen sinks, and often avoid entertaining guests because the house is not clean. Avoiding hospitality because the house is unkempt would be anathema to most Iraqi families.

People in Iraq highly value and protect their private spaces, which only gain by contrast in aesthetic appeal as filth mounts in public spaces where restrooms may get relocated before they get cleaned. Iraqis take shoes off indoors and wall off their private compounds, just as they wall off their women in public with head coverings and veils. Clear boundaries separate public and private worlds in the Middle East by contrast to America, where such boundaries barely exist and many women dress to appear on televisions the way they dress to appear in the bedroom. Much disrespect and misunderstanding results from differing American and Iraqi values priorities with respect to appearances in public and private spaces.

### ***Competence vs. Loyalty***

Assignment of personnel and task organization of units in the American Army is "plug-and-play" based upon capabilities. For assignment and organization purposes, the loyalty of American soldiers is never in doubt. Advancement depends upon performance. When commanders promote based upon personal or family relationships, we call them corrupt.

"Plug-and-play" for Iraqi security forces depends upon relationships. Competency must be secondary. Kurds, Sunnis, Shias, minorities, and tribes all distrust each other. Successful



leaders never take loyalty for granted. Building, maintaining, using, and rewarding relationships takes priority over building, maintaining, using, and rewarding proficiency. Advisors who undermine these priorities constrain their ability to influence leaders.

American politicians operate like Iraqi military leaders. They nearly always value personal, party, and constituent connections over proficiency.

### **Identity and Resolution**

These are only seven examples out of many differences between the ways Americans and Iraqis set priorities on their values. Identifying a culture from elements like language, body language, clothing, food, holidays, rituals, and traditions is easy. Understanding a society's character and behavior from the underlying hierarchy of values is much harder. Experiencing a culture's identity is easy. Experiencing its beliefs and values is difficult. The elements of identity are quaint, entertaining, and morally neutral. The elements of values-based character and behavior are provoking, ambiguous, and laden with moral implications.

Disillusionment or "culture shock" sets in when we move beyond enjoying the different identities and become frustrated by different values. From here we can go into withdrawal, go native, or begin constructive engagement.

Withdrawal results from rejecting both the identity and values system of the target society. "Going native" results from uncritically embracing the target people's beliefs and values. Constructive engagement comes from embracing the new cultural identity and accommodating the target society's beliefs and values without compromising one's own values system.

### ***Withdrawal***

Withdrawn advisors stop engaging counterparts in the target society. Other Americans in non-embedded maneuver and supporting units consider them to be the loyal ones. They isolate themselves from their Iraqi counterparts but can appear productive and busy. Typically they find quantifiable work of which their raters will approve and become too busy to "waste time" in

pursuits that they perceive will never yield results. They become critical of team members who have not withdrawn, and form a clique with others who have joined them. Withdrawn team leaders stop valuing counterpart engagement for team members as well. They perceive target culture beliefs and values will never change, and they are right. Also, trying to change the values and beliefs of Iraqi culture is very un-American and against General Order Number One. What withdrawn advisors don't realize is that beliefs and values don't need to change, because behaviors can change within the existing Iraqi values system.

### ***Going Native***

Advisors who have gone native also stop engaging the target group because they've abandoned their own beliefs that are essential in order to engage it effectively. To the other Americans in non-embedded maneuver and supporting units, they are disloyal. To their Iraqi counterparts, they are weird even though they may be welcomed enthusiastically. They become more than liaisons to American forces. They become advocates for the way Iraqis see and do things and may become an excuse to the Iraqis for them to continue doing it that way. They may or may not still look American, but they act Iraqi. Ironically, they're not likely to become any closer to the Iraqis, and they're likely to lose their Iraqi counterparts' respect. Advisory team chiefs who have gone native typically polarize team members both for and against themselves.

### ***Constructive Engagement (healthy adjustment)***

Advisors constructively engaging their counterparts within Iraqi society have embraced elements of Iraqi identity. They endure aspects that are uncomfortable for them. They appreciate the food as best they can. They value the language and give great respect to their interpreters. They honor Iraqi customs, rituals, holidays, and courtesies. They use Iraqi greetings. They make Iraqi friends and vow to keep in touch. They adhere vigorously to their own system of values, but they do not expect or try to change the values system of Iraq. They try to understand things from the Iraqi perspective. They try to work within the Iraqi values system. They look for ways to alter Iraqi behaviors from within the Iraqi system of values. For those who are withdrawn, people who are constructively engaging may appear to be going native, and may be resented.

### **Solutions through Constructive Engagement**

Influencing behaviors cross-culturally is like assembling a puzzle. Withdrawn advisors have a clear picture of the desired end state, but they throw up their hands in despair after trying to use their own pieces rather than the pieces present in the host society. Advisors who have gone native embrace the host society puzzle pieces, but they have lost sight of the picture that is to be made from them. Constructive engagement entails duplicating the picture that is on our box from the pieces that are present in the Iraqi box. There's not much that a person can do in the whole world that is more slow and frustrating. Few have sufficient creativity and patience for the task, but for those who like this kind of puzzle, there's not much else more fulfilling.

The way that I got my Indonesian students to stop cheating on exams is an example of a way to change behaviors without changing beliefs and values. I got the puzzle picture I wanted with Indonesian social pieces, and I trust that I affected the way that those aspiring English teachers will proctor their exams. The principles are universal, but the application will be unique in every situation. I can't tell you how it will work for you, but I can give you some ideas for how to apply the principles based upon my experience in Indonesia.

### ***Beating Lying***

Working in a society where people lie to preserve honor presents a challenge for outsiders who have never experienced that kind of system before. One important principle is to watch what people do rather than listen to what they say. Americans are socialized to trust people's words more than appearances, so if a man and woman share an apartment and say that they are not having a physical relationship, then Americans are expected to take them at their word. I expect that Iraqis will nearly always judge by appearances. Appearances can be deceptive, but in Indonesia, they were less deceptive than language. In Indonesia appearances frequently mattered more for life and death than the actual reality, and we had to pay very close attention to them.

Another way to get at the truth is to use accountability triangles. In America, it is in poor taste to involve third parties in negotiations and relationships. In Indonesia, where nothing is as people say it is, relationship triangles are everything. It is easier to deceive one than two. As a result, almost no one is ever alone. Every story has another observer through whom it can be checked and double-checked. Every relationship connects to a network of other relationships through which leverage can be brought to bear.

In Indonesia, we always hired two rather than one helper for household chores. For one thing, it

gave our helpers someone else with the same beliefs and values, so that they did not feel isolated. Lying and stealing becomes more difficult when someone else is around. Having two helpers worked to keep them honest with us, and it also helped encourage them that they would not be exploited or lied to by us. We also tried not to hire a helper outside of a third party relationship through which pressure could be brought to bear. The helper's performance then reflected on the honor of the third party. If performance started deteriorating, a hint to our mutual friend would affect our helper's performance.

Iraqis take a lot of time to hang out and drink chai. Maybe it's where they work through all the triangles in their relationships.

### ***Beating Corruption***

Working in a society where patrons are expected to be above the law in order to benefit their family and tribe creates more challenge. Status positions aren't associated with service but with honor, prestige, and privilege. The greater the status, the greater the benefit to clients. "Whistle blowing" hurts the group connected to the patron. A group not connected to the patron can blow the proverbial whistle on corruption, but only after they've taken steps to protect themselves from potential retribution by the group that is connected.

Even Americans follow rules out of self-interest more than a sense of duty to follow the rules. Without enforcement, speed-limit signs mean nothing and laws against pirated DVDs get ignored. Mitigating corruption in the patron client system involves showing the patron and clients how following the rules fits their self-interest.

The best weapon against corruption is to construct the rules so that following them results in status and honor. When it's not possible to restructure the regulations, the advisor must demonstrate how remaining within the rules increases prestige and protects clients. If these results cannot be demonstrated, then don't expect patrons to follow the rules.

### ***Beating Fate***

Adult elephants submit to a flimsy tether and tiny stake because they grow up fastened by chains. When people learn that resistance is futile they turn submission into a mark of spiritual maturity. When advisors demand struggle against a status quo, they aren't just challenging learned behaviors, they are perceived to be challenging the will of God.

Getting Iraqis to take personal responsibility for their own fate and corporate responsibility for their destiny may require getting them to see the tools and means (like body armor and TTPs) as gifts from God, not just for survival but for status and honor. Iraqis will struggle for honor. Getting them to use maintenance and supply systems in ways that alter rather than maintain the status quo will probably take giving them a fresh perspective on honor and God's will that embraces a new definition of what is normal.

Most societies have a way to express the concept of God helping those who help themselves, if you can find it. One of the Hadiths on the life of Muhammad has this story: "Should I tether my camel or trust in God alone?" a man asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). 'First tether your camel, then trust in God,' the Prophet replied."

### ***Apologizing***

Watch and learn how Iraqis reconcile with each other when one has offended another. In Indonesia it was rarely done with an apology and then forgiveness. News of a breach in relationship was not communicated directly, but usually through a third party or mediator. Reconciliation occurred after a price (usually a gift) had been paid, and usually no mention of the offense was ever made. Pay close attention to interpreters as mediators when they tell you that someone has been offended. You can probably relay your understanding of the offense through a mediator and then do something nice for the person whom you have offended in order to reconcile.

### **Roles**

The discussion presented in this essay is not exhaustive and is not a template to be imitated thoughtlessly. It merely demonstrates principles of constructive engagement. It shows how advisors can influence behavior in a different values system by accommodating that system without compromising their own beliefs and values.

To have influence, however, the advisor must establish a valid presence within the target society. People in the target audience are like actors on a stage. Advisors are complete outsiders. They have no status and start off without any honor. They are like people in the auditorium audience. They can clap, cry, and boo, but they have no access to influence play production. To influence actor movement, lines, or props, one must have a role in the production. Some roles are more influential than others. When you volunteer to help out in producing a play, you will be assigned a role. Everyone who shows up on a Transition Team gets assigned a role. It is not the role given by the Americans. *The Iraqis run the stage and they make the role assignments according to what is familiar to them.*

Here are some of the roles that Iraqis understand from within their culture, and into which you may be cast.

### ***Patron - Client***

Iraqis are intimately familiar with patron and client roles, but Americans are not. Unless you work consciously against it, you will likely find yourself in one of these roles and not have the slightest clue about what is going on.

Iraqis of stature will want to treat you as a client – especially in public or in front of their peers. They will humor you and take care of you. They will treat you as someone inferior and of lower status. They may even show you off to their friends as a kind of curiosity. They will enjoy opportunities to “put you in your place,” so to speak, and “show you who’s boss.” Resisting these little put downs will look worse for you than for them. They will expect you to treat them not just respectfully, but also deferentially. They will expect you to treat them with honor. If you meet their expectations, then you may be able to approach them more as an equal in private. If you don’t accommodate their expectations, then as people of stature in the society, they can make life difficult for you.

Iraqis without social stature will treat you as a patron – especially in private. There will be no end to the things they will want from you. They will give you honor, but not likely service. In exchange they will expect you to take care of them. Part of honoring you is showing you how

they cannot do things for themselves. Only patrons (people of status and honor) can get things done. Initiative in a client dishonors the patron.

The patron-client relationship is one of the most natural for Iraqis to put you in – especially if you come in as the arrogant American expert who is not accountable to the Iraqis. Then, the Iraqis of status will want to put you in your place and the Iraqis without status will be happy to depend upon you. The closest thing to the patron-client relationship in America is probably the parent-child relationship. Clients are like adults who never stop depending upon their parents, and patrons are like parents who never want their children to grow up and become independent.

### ***Inspector***

Desiring some insight into the impact he was having, a Military Transition Team Chief asked his counterpart, “How do Iraqi soldiers and commanders see me when I visit and circulate with them?” The answer surprised and disappointed him. “You are like an inspector,” his counterpart told him.

The inspector role is one with which we are all familiar and one to which Iraqi counterparts also relate. Inspectors around the world usually achieve great respect for their position without much appreciation for their purpose. Iraqi leaders may meet expectations when checked, but what will happen when the American advisors acting as inspectors are gone? The inspector role can produce quick, but often only fleeting results. Fitting into it is easy. Breaking out of it is hard. It is not a good role for facilitating lasting systemic changes.

### ***Teacher - Learner***

A better role than patron-client, to which Iraqis can also easily relate is the role of teacher - learner. The role can be reciprocal and it carries less baggage related to status. The best way to use this role is to enter it on the side of being a learner.

As an initial posture for the outsider, the learner role does three things. First, it diminishes the

impact of ethnocentrism and arrogance, for which Americans are well known, whether fairly or unfairly. Secondly, it creates some time and space for adjusting to new surroundings, postponing mistakes that will inevitably come. Third, it establishes a relationship grounded in humility, so that when mistakes are made, they can be more easily corrected and forgiven.

The learner role can also become an advisory tool. Any of you experienced in teaching know that you always seem to learn more about a subject by teaching it. Becoming your counterpart's student in the areas where he most needs to change can profoundly stimulate that growth. For junior officers and NCOs likely to be disrespected for their lower status, the role can be especially empowering.

Reciprocity will usually kick in. After spending time as a learner, the outsider will usually be asked to give some instruction. Advice is always better received when solicited than when unsolicited. By modeling the ability to solicit and receive advice, you establish a non-intimidating relationship, making it easier for your counterpart to solicit and receive advice from you.

### ***Trader***

The Middle East has always been at the center of international trade routes. These countries and people have centuries of experience in hosting outsiders for mutually profitable give and take. You bring something valuable to your counterpart, otherwise your presence would not be tolerated. In fact, your survival and force protection are directly related to your perceived value.

To the degree it protects and preserves your ability to be present in a position where you can have influence, being or feeling "used" is no shame. In cross-cultural church work in undeveloped parts of the world, local indigenous pastors often use white-skinned missionaries as a kind of "side show" to attract an audience for revival meetings. A crowd gathers to see and hear the white foreigner. The pastor gets to collect names for future direct evangelistic visitation. And the white foreigner gains influential access to an otherwise closed location.

In Iraq, you bring status and funds to your Iraqi counterpart. Through these you can establish yourself in a position of value and influence. There is no shame in allowing the funds and status you bring to be exploited as a kind of "side show." If you make funds and status central to your mission, then you risk building dependency from which you cannot extract yourself. If you resist



giving the Iraqis what they want, then you undercut your perceived value and risk your own security. Giving the Iraqis what they want allows you into a position for having influence elsewhere. You just have to be sure that what you give the Iraqis does not create dependency.

### ***Mediators***

In a society where people value honor and avoid confrontation, much conflict resolution occurs through mediators. Meetings are not for deliberations. They are rubber stamps for decisions that have already been made either autocratically or through mediation.

As an outsider, you have no status or honor to lose. Therefore, Iraqis may try to use you as a mediator in their conflicts.

As an outsider representing foreign interests, the closer you get to an important Iraqi leader the more vulnerable that person becomes to appearances of being a puppet. If an important Iraqi leader is avoiding your advice, it may not be to avoid your help, but to project an appearance of personal sovereignty. In this situation, you must either find ways to gain more subtle access or send your input through a mediator.

Finally, the most significant and lasting way for you to influence Iraqi systems is through a convert to your ideas from within the Iraqi system itself. Jesus altered history with eleven disciples (the twelfth was a traitor). If you are able to make a disciple at any level, then you have had tremendous success. Your most significant and lasting impact may your least visible or measurable.

### ***Mentors***

The final role I will discuss is not for you to enter. It is for you to put others into.

As an outsider wanting to be an advisor, you must develop relationships with people within the

culture who will advise you. These should be people who are different than the ones whom you are trying to influence. These will be people with whom you can be humble and vulnerable. Your relationship with them must be such that they can step in and correct you.

Mentors will often be your interpreters, but your interpreters are not enough. Your interpreters are often outsiders themselves, both to the military sub-culture and to the particular ethnic group where you are working. Your interpreters are often so thoroughly westernized themselves that they can no longer accurately understand and represent the insider's perspective.

You must aggressively search for and develop relationships with insiders who will advise you on how you can be a better and more influential advisor, how you can be respectful, and whether you are making a cultural mistake.

### **Joy in the Puzzle Palace**

The Army does a good job preparing you for what a specific foreign culture is like, but it doesn't do a very good job of explaining why it is that way, or preparing you to negotiate the adjustment process and become a person of cross-cultural influence.

Embedding within a foreign society is like growing up. Both are processes with inevitable and irreversible stages. In growing up, we proceed from infancy through adolescence to either well- or poorly-adjusted adulthood. In embedding within a foreign society, we proceed through the orientation, tourist, and disillusionment stages to become either well-adjusted and constructively engaged or poorly-adjusted by either going native or becoming withdrawn.

Exerting influence from within a foreign society is like raising children. Like children, every society has a unique personality very different from our own. Wise parents steer their children into independence and maturity within the framework of their children's personalities without either giving up or trying to alter them entirely. All societies have the same basic values, but they prioritize them differently. Influential embedded advisors have enough security in their own identity and values that they can facilitate behavioral changes within a system of values different from their own without compromising their own set of values.

Assembling a familiar looking puzzle with completely different pieces can be both frustrating and fulfilling. In Iraq, changing behaviors in order to enhance security is the puzzle. Different values priorities and insecure roles for outsiders are the pieces. Americans highly regard freedom. Iraqis more highly regard honor. Americans highly regard service. Iraqis more highly regard status. Americans readily extend forgiveness based on a promise of change. Iraqis readily extend forgiveness after justice has been served. American spirituality highlights struggling against the forces of nature and fate. Iraqi spirituality highlights submitting to nature and fate. These are just some of the many ways values priorities differ between Americans and Iraqis. Because Americans are not out to change anyone's beliefs and values, our advising must accommodate rather than change the system we find in Iraq.

Americans in Iraq are outsiders. They don't have access to roles of honor and influence that are open to native Iraqis, but they can assume roles to which Iraqis can relate and from which they can exert influence. They can easily become patrons, clients, traders, teachers, learners, or mediators.

Finally, for thoroughly learning the social context, Americans must develop relationships with Iraqis who will be their mentors – advisors to the advisors so to speak. And for leaving a lasting legacy, Americans must recruit insiders who will be mediators – disciples who will promote the desired behavioral changes in their own culture according to their own values system. With this approach, you have a chance of putting together the puzzle.

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