

THE CRISIS OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

The Anthropology of
Civil–Military Operations



David Hyndman • Scott Flower

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BOOK REVIEW

The Crisis of Cultural Intelligence, The Anthropology of Civil-Military Operations

By David Hyndman and Scott Flower

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By Rudolph C. Rýser

What does it mean when the investigator into the most intimate details of cultural life for a community uses the data and findings to guide states' government strategic and military operations? David Hyndman and Scot Flower's book *The Crisis of Cultural Intelligence* gives a clear and unambiguous picture of what is meant when social scientists are not restrained by ethical commitments, but use their knowledge and skills to expose the weaknesses and character of cultures for so they can be exploited.

Hyndman traces the path of understanding "culture and the cultural environment of conflict zones through anthropology" using what he refers to as the "exclusive club based on military culture, common language, and common history"—the alliance between America, Britain, Canada Australia and New Zealand (ABCA). Anthropology, Hyndman suggests became essential to the conduct of warfare for these "Anglo-Saxon" states as they pursue complex insurgency and counter insurgency

wars in a world of transnational, asymmetrical and non-state actor forces. Counter insurgency against asymmetrical forces such as militias, tribal warrior groups requires tactical methods to target suspected insurgents for abduction or assassination in the war environment. Conventional counter insurgency techniques frequently faltered forcing consideration of a different approach. Generals leading ABCA forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and other theatres such as Vietnam, Guatemala, Niger, and Somalia considered anthropology to be the discipline "invented to support war fighting in the tribal zone" as Hyndman quotes Montgomery McFate, seated as the Minerva Chair at the US Naval War College in the United States of America.

Seeing the common "settler colonial" history of the ABCA as a feature drawing these states together in their joint diplomatic concerns, Hyndman calls attention to the common commitments and shared views on strategic military initiatives as well. Recalling Franz Boas' 1919 *The Nation* article "Scien-

tists as Spies” Hyndman notes that Boas offered an ethical critique of social scientists working in World War I as government agents. He goes on to point out that half of the “anthropologists in the 1930s and 1940s worked with the Applied Anthropology Unit at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Community Analyst Program under the War Relocation Authority.” A similar practice occurred in Australia, Canada, Britain and New Zealand. Each of these states having a similar “settler colonial” experience viewed the commitment of indigenous nations to collective ownership an obstacle to assimilation claiming as Hyndman quotes Wolfe as writing that these nations “were the original communist menace.”

“Anthropologists as Spies” dedicated to advancing the strategic interests of the ABCA countries is a remarkable admission by Franz Boas that got him into trouble with his academic brethren in Cambridge and the American Anthropological Association. Similarly, Hyndman’s exposition has the potential of drawing criticism from academic as well as government institutions interested in maintaining cover for the social scientist now acting as sources for “cultural intelligence” useful for strategic and counter intelligence activities. The use of anthropologists in clandestine activities in America’s wars grew in importance from World War II through the Korean, Vietnam, Somalia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Iraqi wars since indigenous peoples’ combatants were and are present in all of these theaters.

Meanwhile *The Crisis of Cultural Intelligence* becomes a primer on the struggle within the social science and especially the social anthropology community over ethical questions of the profession contributing to the strategic problems for Fourth World peoples. Hyndman’s detailed discussion of personalities and ethical contests within the Amer-

ican Anthropological Association reveals how many professional anthropologists became vigorous opponents to the American (Australian, Canadian, New Zealand) war in Vietnam resulting in a split between those anthropologists who directly engaged in “cultural intelligence” for the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other security agencies, and those who specifically rejected such participation. Hyndman’s discussion of the political splits especially in the United States may well reflect Hyndman’s dilemma as a professional anthropologist and scholar. When Fourth World nations began to arm themselves (Karen in Burma, Mayans in Guatemala, African nations in South Africa, Papuans in Indonesia, Naga in India, Uyghurs in China to name a few), states turned more vigorously to anthropologists for “cultural intelligence” but instead of an overwhelming willingness to aid and assist the strategic interests of the ABCA states, there was often vigorous opposition. As Hyndman tells the story, the American Anthropological Association that once criticized the suggestion that Anthropologists could be acting as spies in indigenous communities now had developed an ethical code to which it wanted to bind its members. When some members acted to join in intelligence gathering as professional anthropologists especially during and after the war in Vietnam, the American Anthropological Association became the public forum on state policies and violations of the new ethical codes that essential argued—do no harm—as the medical associations stated in their ethical codes.

The Crisis of Cultural Intelligence takes the reader into the history of the American Indian Movement in the United States that was echoed in its persistent demand for indigenous rights as occurred in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Chief

George Manuel's political influence and leadership in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and new anthropological publications by Richard Lee and Susan Jurlich, Robert Carmack, David Hyndman himself, John H. Bodley and the works of Bernard Q. Nietschmann dramatically influenced a redirection of anthropological inquiries into the conflicts between states' governments and Fourth World nations. The literature as well as the rapidly emerging political analysis from Chief George Manuel, Russell Means, Joe DeLaCruz, Mel Tonasket, Ramona Bennett, and other leadership from indigenous communities began to change the anthropological landscape. Rapidly unfolding conflicts around the world involving indigenous nations defending against development projects, state military insurgencies, and genocidal attacks destabilized many states. These events were supplemented by the rapid-fire development in the 1980s and 1990s of new international instruments intended to register the fundamental

rights of indigenous peoples as matters of international concern. Hyndman examines the significance of these new conflicts as well as the new international declarations and conventions that presumed to protect indigenous peoples' rights. While discussing all of this Hyndman carries through the theme of his book the role of anthropology in the changing social, political and strategic environment between the ABCA and indigenous peoples.

The Crisis of Cultural Intelligence ends with an open-ended coda where the ABCA continue to work in concert dealing with counter insurgency strategies and continuing to reach out to social scientists, but the controversy rages on within the profession: When Fourth World nations are enticed to trust a social anthropologist, can they know that the knowledge thus obtained will be used for the benefit or disadvantage of the people from whom cultural information has been received?

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Rudolph Ryser has worked in the field of Indian Affairs for more than thirty-five years as a writer, researcher and Indian rights advocate. Rudolph has taught widely on historical trauma, cultural models of addictions recovery, diabetes and culture, foods and medicine. He is the leading architect of the discipline of Fourth World Geopolitics--the study and practice of the social, economic, political and

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