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Preface to the New Edition

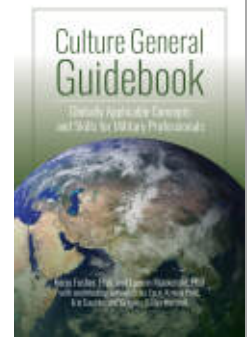
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Preface to the New Edition

The idea for the *Culture General Guidebook* arose out of many discussions with military personnel and the scholars, educators, trainers, curriculum developers, and others who work with them. As we discuss in the section on frameworks in chapter I, Services had somewhat different approaches to teaching about culture, based on Service needs and the preferences of the individuals who developed the frameworks. Typically, such frameworks were used to organize culture-specific or regional information. However, there was no accessible compendium of the more general concepts and skills that military personnel use to navigate culturally complex situations at home and abroad. We created the guidebook to help fill that gap for military personnel and the professionals who support military learning.

Much has changed since the initial publication of the guidebook in 2017. In the intervening years, U.S. military Services shifted attention and resources to concepts like information operations and great power competition. While culture is a key component of understanding any aspect of national security, in the minds of those making resource decisions, culture was linked to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and no longer needed. Many culture-related programs were reduced or closed, including the Marine Corps' culture center, the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), where the guidebook's authors worked. Readers interested in the development and eventual decline in military culture programs may wish to read the edited volume chronicling these changes, *The Rise and Decline of U.S. Military Culture Programs, 2004–20*.²

Despite these organizational changes, military personnel still want

² Kerry B. Foshier and Lauren Mackenzie, eds., *The Rise and Decline of U.S. Military Culture Programs 2004–20* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.56686/9781732003187>.

and need to learn about culture. Both digital and physical copies of the guidebook continue to be in demand. The original publication was created by CAOCL with no provision for reproduction or continued availability. The authors were, therefore, delighted when Marine Corps University Press expressed interest in adopting the publication, ensuring that it will be available to military personnel and educators in the future.

About This Edition

The concepts and skills presented in the guidebook are general in nature, and applicable in many, if not most, intercultural interactions. Consequently, few updates and revisions were required for this edition. Users of the original will find the same useful concepts, skills, advice, and tools derived from the editors' and contributing authors' decades of experience with culture training, education, and research.

The guidebook was written for practical use. It is based on the scholarly knowledge and practical experiences of the authors but does not contain as many citations as would a scholarly work. Scholarly readers will be able to discern that it draws heavily on theories from the fields of cultural anthropology and sociology (mainly practice theory), intercultural communication (with an emphasis on social constructionism), cross-cultural psychology, and cultural geography. However, the authors and vignette contributors come from a very wide range of backgrounds and some information and advice is taken straight from the experiences of our military colleagues. Also, some terms common in scholarly circles have been renamed on the advice of military colleagues. For example, the concept of *emotional self-regulation* is presented as *self-regulation* and *maintaining tact and bearing*. As such, the guidebook's contents cannot easily be categorized as belonging to one discipline. Those interested in further reading may find the annotations in Appendix B: Additional Resources useful as a guide to baseline reference material.

This new publication also retains the original organization. The original preface sets out the rationale for learning generalizable cultural concepts and skills rather than focusing exclusively on culture-specific and regional knowledge and language. Chapter 1: Introduction sets out different types of culture-related learning, defines terms, addresses frameworks, and gives the reader four key rules of the road for intercultural interactions and navigating cultural complexity. Chapter 2: Culture General Concepts presents core ideas for thinking about culture and then a series of concepts for understanding and analyzing culture. Chapter 3: Culture General Skills provides important communication skills military personnel can put into practice in a range of settings. The guidebook concludes with a series of appendices including reference material and teaching tools.

As with the original, we encourage readers to use this edition of the guidebook as it makes sense for their purposes. Most military personnel tell us they have found it useful to read some of the introductory material and then read specific sections as their interest and missions dictate. However, curriculum developers and educators may find it more helpful to skim all main sections to determine what to include in a particular course or module. This is not a perfect guide to every concept or skill that might be useful in every conceivable situation. However, the authors hope that it serves as a good baseline for military personnel to develop the cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral skills they need in an increasingly complex national security environment.

