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Federico Prizzi's *Cultural Intelligence ed Etnografia di Guerra-Il ruolo dell'antropologia nello studio dell'information warfare di Al Shabaab* (Cultural Intelligence and Ethnography of War –the role of anthropology in studying the information warfare of Al Shabaab) is a path-breaking work which fills an intellectual and operative gap inside the topic of the role of ethnographic research in military operations, and takes as focal point the study of the cultural dimension of contemporary conflicts.

The book is organized in seven chapters: the cultural evolution of contemporary conflicts; cultural intelligence; the United States and the use of anthropology in the study of conflicts; NATO and the need to understand the operational environment; Anthropology and Security Studies; outlining a professional profile; case study: Al Shabaab and information warfare.

The author, since his first chapter provide a rich documented and critical review of the cultural evolution of contemporary conflicts and how the US and NATO have tried to understand the 'area of operations' of conflicts-peacekeeping operations-crisis management operations etc. in which they have participated since the fall of the Berlin wall.

However, Prizzi is very clear in stating that this study has a dual purpose: to outline a new discipline to support military operations: cultural intelligence; and a new professional profile in the armed forces: the war ethnographer. And to prove his point he applies his approach and theory to the information warfare of Al Shabaab.

Key point of this book is that for the author contemporary wars are no longer a clash of armies on battlefields. Armies are no longer the main tool of war. Today, however, wars are not declared, but are waged indirectly: opponents are attacked through the media, with disinformation, with financial attacks on the stock markets, with economic sanctions, supporting armed struggle movements, but also through 'peaceful' street protests, creating armies of mercenaries, killing opponents with guided missiles, with drones, with lethal viruses, and even with legal scandals. And it is precisely on the socio-cultural component of the masses, on their emotionality, on their pliability, that the merchants of death always leverage.

Therefore, the sociocultural aspects and features of the new conflict become the anthropological place and space of the war ethnographer. In this anthropological dimension the cognitive perception is the key element of the analysis because what we are facing right now are cognitive wars, meaning information conflicts. Principal strategy of the

cognitive war is represented by the cognitive attack which tends to manipulate information to influence thoughts, behaviours, acting on morale, cohesion, political stability, to the point of undermining the will of the enemy. Specifically, the cognitive war wants to hit the 'vitality' of the system 'or that nucleus that every nation has and which is represented by culture, history, language, traditions, ideals and common objectives. This core is defined as ideology, and ideology is the navigator of a nation that connects the past, the present, and the future. And the same concepts and mechanisms work for the subversion.

Therefore, a military intervention always interferes with local society, so it is essential for an army to understand the 'human factor' meaning how the local civilian population perceives the foreign military presence. These new wars, which are asymmetrical, will increasingly be in urban centers and in the midst of the local population. Thus, in asymmetrical warfare, human terrain must be studied to win. The human terrain is that social, political and economic environment, shaped by history and characterized by one or more cultures that over time have developed specific forms of interaction. The human terrain is a physical and virtual space, which corresponds to the area of operations, inside which military personnel can operate during a conflict or for its prevention. Hence the importance of the study of culture, religion, myths, legends, language, music, literature and everything that is shaped by a precise weltanschauung (a particular philosophy or view of life; the world view of an individual or group).

Based on the US, NATO, and author's own personal, professional, and academic experiences Prizzi identifies two elements which according to him are vital to understand, to produce knowledge, and to operate in the context of these new and asymmetrical conflicts: cultural intelligence and the creation of the professional role of the ethnographer of war.

Cultural intelligence indicates the ability of the individual to interact correctly with a different culture. An interaction necessary for work purposes aimed at the effective overcoming of ethnocentric prejudice. Prejudice that prevents a multinational team from working cohesively, thus causing damage to the company in terms of lost earnings. The application of cultural intelligence in the context of conflicts was created to address the cultural knowledge gaps of military staff. Staff who, in any case, will then have to put into practice this knowledge acquired in the planning and conduct phases of military operations. Research in cultural intelligence is multifocal and employs the specific analysis

carried out by war ethnographers on certain geographic areas, to reconstruct an overall vision; moreover it must take into consideration a wide spectrum of contexts from which to obtain information necessary for the analysis of a group. Cultural intelligence is applied anthropology and makes use of dense description in which the understanding of the cultural metaphor, hidden in the common language, as in the propaganda, allows to understand that what is at stake are the emotions, and consequently, what is the vision of the world that the human terrain does not intend to give up. Therefore, the conflict ethnographer must have an emic approach and perceive events through the eyes and emotions of the population living in a context of war, which being a cultural product, is fluid and always susceptible to adaptations and different behaviours to depending on the people who decide to fight it. However, in his/her analysis the study of the human group studied in relation to its surrounding environment must also take into account the virtual environment such as that of social media.

The war ethnographer is a military anthropologist: military personnel with a degree in anthropology, who is part of a conventional army of a sovereign state which is asked by his/her hierarchical chain to carry out ethnographic field research and collect data in order to support the planning and conduct of military operations. The military ethnographer belongs to a military unit and during the research he/she wears the military uniform so he/she respects all the parameters provided for by International Law. However, the research of the war ethnographer is made in a context strongly conditioned by violence, where the premises with whom he/she relates in his daily work can be people traumatized by the brutality of the conflict. A violence that is often irrational and an end in itself; which reproduces itself by the simple fact of being itself a child of violence; that alters the perception of events and therefore of appeals, and that affects the interpretation of facts by those who lived them. The research field is therefore an emotional field and the war ethnographer must balance between an emic and etic approach and develop an anthropology of emotions. The working methodology of the war ethnographer is based on: participant immersion; ethnographic collection; interviews with whistleblowers; ethnographic interpretation; ethnographic writing.

However, what makes cultural intelligence peculiar is that it is produced by a war ethnographer, who is military and operates on the ground of operations. The war ethnographer is an operator who must collect useful data for the military staff. His/her model of writing and anthropological experience must respect the model of military reports,

therefore an aseptic model without the 'I' narrator, an impersonal work that is functional to military planning. Furthermore, the war ethnographer must demonstrate that he/she has an overview of the course of the conflict. This ethnographic collection and anthropological analysis, in their implementation modalities, are more akin to the intelligence work of many other academic disciplines. Consequently, cultural intelligence starts from the awareness that in the field, in areas of crisis, scientific impartiality is impossible to achieve. Human sciences are not laboratory studies that take place isolated from the surrounding world, but are in the world and in the midst of its dangers. It is inevitable to be biased, because taking sides allows the researcher first of all a certain physical security and then research.

Prizzi's work covers different and various aspects related to the theorization and interpretation of a 'reality-situation' in which local populations, foreign military personnel, politicians, civilians, international relations experts, media etc operate. And the case study he has presented is a clear example of the implementation of his theories in a complex society which lives in a conflict area. His work opens a debate on the ontological and epistemological aspects of what represent to intervene in a foreign country which has been defined of 'security' concern by UN, NATO or other security organizations. With this work we go back to the debate that a map is not a territory and the territory is not a map, however there are responsibilities toward the life of people who live and operate in the operational field (foreign military forces, and local population). Because, how Prizzi brilliantly unfold in his study, the number of errors committed by various 'experts' had disastrous impact on the lives of the soldiers, local population, diasporas communities, and post-conflict reconstruction projects. The superficiality, the lack of real knowledge, the use of the 'authorized' knowledge (most of the time based on propaganda and silly stereotypes), and the implementation of absurd theories which have accompanied the military interventions in former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria etc are in front of us, and nobody can deny the mistake committed in identifying, analysing, and studying the local realities on which various actors were called to operate.

Therefore, 'Cultural Intelligence and Ethnography of War' is a text which should be used in the academic circle and, first of all, be adopted by the General Staff of various Armed Forces. The brute force of Achilles did not help to conquer Troy. It was Ulysses who adopting an anthropological gaze was able to identify that symbol of the local culture that allowed him to enter and conquer Troy. And this is the clear message of Federico Prizzi.