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Operationalizing Culture: Using Identity as the Tool

Radicalization & Violent Extremism Symposium
Culture In Conflict Symposium

The issue is Not Culture



Cultural literacy means more than becoming familiar with the elements of a particular culture, it means becoming familiar with the elements that comprise the identity of a culture.



Identity is nurtured by social patterns unique to a particular group, community or society.

Identity plays upon the norms, values, ideologies, and customs that exist within societies.

Identity is an invaluable assets when identifying instability.

The majority of social, political, and even inter-personal conflict is identity-based

“What compels people to commit acts of aggression?”

The traditional answer has been poverty, lack of education and opportunities, and other sociological problems.

That answer does not map onto the facts we now have.

Social/economic status and educational level are not indicators of potential to violence.

Violence occurs when identities are threatened

Identity Conflict Theory



- Identity conflicts occur when a person or group feels their identity is threatened or denied legitimacy.
- Governments and corporations are engaged in conflicts against individuals, communities and criminal organizations.
- At the center of these conflicts are the various ethnic, religious, and social identities that foment unrest and drive violence.
- Clearly understanding the central role of identity is crucial for preventing conflict, or addressing it once it occurs.

Improve the effectiveness of humanitarian and military operations

- A strategy to foster co-existence where resolution is not plausible.
- Identity is a crucial component of any design plan.



A Strategy to Design Operations Around

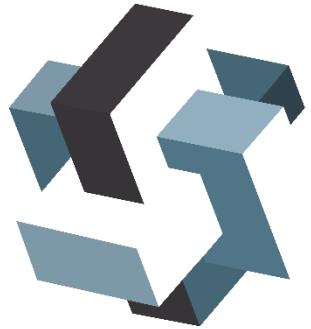


- Understand the identities that exist across geopolitical, socioeconomic or ethnoreligious conditions.
- Uncover the social tensions that underpin instability within societies.
- Create effective development programs and engagement strategies based upon identity.

Afghanistan: Case Study



- Pashtunwali
- Badal
- Melmastia
- Farmer



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