



Pt 3, Culture—the Vital Differences that Color Life

Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction

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It has become increasingly important to understand the cultural context in which U.S. foreign and defense policies operate. Our failure to anticipate the tragic terrorist attacks of 9/11 was more than a “failure of imagination,” as the 9/11 Commission formally concluded, and it was more than a failure of the intelligence community. It was a failure of the United States to understand its place in the world, to understand the impact its actions were having on various segments of world opinion, and it was a collective failure to appreciate that cultural values can sometimes drive political

actions.

Several government-commissioned studies and reports over the last several years have concluded that understanding strategic culture is vital to effectively implementing and safeguarding U.S. national security and foreign policy. One example is the 2004 Defense Science Board Study on Strategic Communications. This report concluded, among other things, that hostility to U.S. national security goals and policies is undermining U.S. power, influence, and strategic alliances. It further asserted that much of this hostility is driven by a lack of understanding of the cultural and regional context for U.S. policy. As with other studies, it called for educational and training efforts to be undertaken to address the need for greater cultural understanding.

No Events