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Dealing with Absolutes: Religion, the Operational Environment, and the Art of Design.

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Abstract : MY DISCUSSION HERE examines the effects of religion on the operational environment and how planners and commanders may use the concept of Design to gain a

deeper situational understanding of the role religion plays in motivating and justifying actions in this environment. Design and Ideological Mobilizations Recently, the U.S. Army has recognized the need for a broader understanding of the complex environments in which it operates. Consequently, the Army is institutionalizing a more holistic approach that seeks to understand situations in greater breadth and depth with an aim to find deeper and more durable solutions to complex problems. This process, known as Design, seeks to understand by framing a given situation within a context. When the situation changes, planners will reframe a perspective against a more relevant context. Practitioners of Design include not only traditional military, political, and environmental factors in their analysis and synthesis, but also broader areas of human endeavor such as history, culture, society, and religion. The method of Design is useful to strategic planners only if it facilitates a more accurate understanding of reality and therefore fosters helpful modifications to operational plans. Fully understanding the role of religion in a given situation or event goes beyond simple rational understanding. It includes accepting and apprehending other modes of human perception, exchange, and discourse. These modes include emotional empathy and consideration of other opinions-even those opinions that lie outside the parameters of traditional Western logic, judgments, perceptions, and intuitions.

Descriptors : *SYSTEMS APPROACH , *RELIGION , SOLUTIONS(GENERAL) , HOLISM , PERCEPTION(PSYCHOLOGY) , ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT , MODIFICATION

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