



PARDEE RAND GRADUATE SCHOOL

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
EDUCATION AND THE ARTS
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
LAW AND BUSINESS
NATIONAL SECURITY
POPULATION AND AGING
PUBLIC SAFETY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.

This electronic document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

Skip all front matter: [Jump to Page 1](#) ▼

Support RAND

[Browse Reports & Bookstore](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore the [Pardee RAND Graduate School](#)

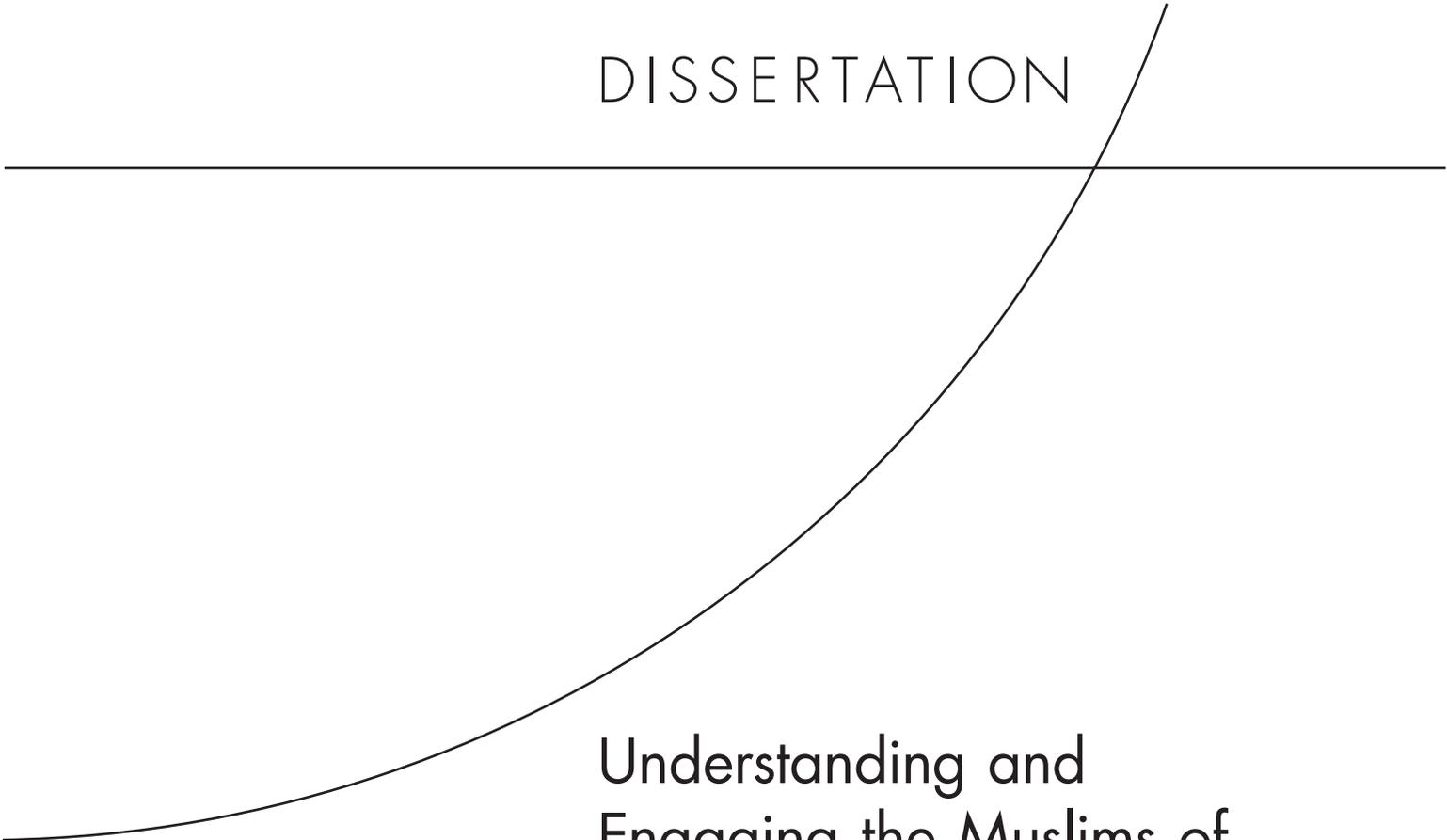
View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND electronic documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND electronic documents are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see [RAND Permissions](#).

This product is part of the Pardee RAND Graduate School (PRGS) dissertation series. PRGS dissertations are produced by graduate fellows of the Pardee RAND Graduate School, the world's leading producer of Ph.D.'s in policy analysis. The dissertation has been supervised, reviewed, and approved by the graduate fellow's faculty committee.

DISSERTATION



Understanding and Engaging the Muslims of the Southern Philippines

Diana L. Dunham-Scott

This document was submitted as a dissertation in June 2012 in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the doctoral degree in public policy analysis at the Pardee RAND Graduate School. The faculty committee that supervised and approved the dissertation consisted of John Peters (Chair), Dick Hoffmann, and David Kennedy.



PARDEE RAND GRADUATE SCHOOL

The Pardee RAND Graduate School dissertation series reproduces dissertations that have been approved by the student's dissertation committee.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from RAND.

Published 2012 by the RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
4570 Fifth Avenue, Suite 600, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2665
RAND URL: <http://www.rand.org>
To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact
Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;
Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

Summary

Understanding and Engaging Muslims in the Philippines

The 2011 US National Strategy for Counterterrorism maintains the focus of the United States on pressuring al-Qaida's core, while emphasizing the need to build foreign partnerships and capacity. The strategy states that the US is engaged in a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners, and multilateral institutions. Beyond al-Qaida, other foreign terrorist organizations threaten US national security interests. These groups seek to undermine the security and stability of allied and partner governments. Building strong enduring partnerships based on *common understandings* of the threat, the local culture, and common objectives is essential to every one of the strategy's overarching counterterrorism objectives, and the US endeavors to do so in the southern Philippines.

In a remote province of the Southern Philippines, the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) has been working to support US national strategy in a whole-of-government approach fully partnered with the Government of the Philippines (GRP). The task force performs security assistance activities and foreign internal defense (FID) to combat the violent extremist organizations (VEOs) Abu Sayyaf, Jemaah Islamiyah, Moro Islamic Liberation Front and other groups in the area while working with USAID and other organizations to improve conditions, governance, and development in Mindanao.

This dissertation is based on field work conducted in the southern Philippines to explore and compare how members of the US military, Philippine military and police, and populace of Mindanao understand Islamic beliefs and values, using anthropological research methods. This will shed light on the degree to which the task force shares an understanding of the local culture with its partners and populace and where any divergence of understanding may lie. This will better enable USG personnel to discern the cultural implications when engaging Muslim populations in the Southern Philippines

during irregular warfare or security assistance activities and inform capacity-building, development and diplomatic efforts.

Cultural domain analysis revealed the richness of perspectives about Muslims in the research population. The large range and diversity of characteristics that people use to discuss Muslims and Islam in the Philippines describe a very unfamiliar cultural domain with a vastly different ethnic context than Iraq or Afghanistan. The analysis suggested stark differences in point of view between the different stakeholders in the area—local Muslims view themselves primarily in terms of their tribal/ethnic identity while JSOTF-P members view Muslims mainly through the lenses of sectarian orientation, religious extremism/moderation and violence.

Cultural consensus analysis did find that major stakeholders in the Southern Philippines do not share a common understanding of the culture. This could be an impediment to a proper intelligence estimate of the situation when planning any kind of operation, whether a raid, a training event, a community engagement or development project. We cannot necessarily rely on what our AFP partners tell us; they also lack expertise on the culture. We have disconnects within and between major stakeholders where we should have a “three-legged stool.” This disparity in viewpoints is very important for the task force to be aware of and to manage properly. Conversely, our partners in the military, law enforcement and community leaders should be aware of how others perceive them.

The good news is that key stakeholders do appear to have a degree of shared appreciation, or homogeneity of views and high levels of cultural knowledge. There are culturally knowledgeable members of the JSOTF-P of all ranks and educational levels, and there is significant concordance with the Muslim respondents. The PNP in particular, having many members from local communities, has cultural expertise which we should leverage. This would better enable USG personnel to discern the cultural implications when engaging Muslim populations in the Southern Philippines during irregular warfare or security assistance activities and inform capacity-building, development and diplomatic efforts.