

Security Briefs 23 – Strategic Intercultural Relations Part 5

We are continuing our conversation about Strategic Intercultural Relations or S. I. R. Last episode we explored how awareness is the link between legitimacy and respect, and we discussed specifically self-awareness and cultural awareness.

In this episode, we will finish our conversation on cultural awareness and talk more about Situational Awareness.

Cultural Awareness and Actor Mapping

We sometimes look at cultures as though they were neutral. But the truth is that there are both positive and negative elements in every culture. In the Old Testament we learned about cultures that practiced child sacrifice which were utterly condemned by God. We cannot simply embrace something because it is part of a culture, we must be more discerning than that and measure behaviors and beliefs against the standard of Scripture.

Similarly, we should understand that there are different groups within our country and community. Some have different ethnic, political, religious, or even militant views. We need to understand who is who and how they relate to one another as part of our cultural awareness. Some of these groups may be hostile to your activity while others may be neutral or friendly.

Understanding these groups, what they believe, and where they are located is called “Actor Mapping” and is an important part of S. I. R. and security behavior in general. We’ve provided a link in the transcript of this episode with a link to a resource that can help you better understand actor mapping.

Situational Awareness

Because hostile actions toward expats are more common, it is important to practice situational awareness. This term simply means being aware of what is going on around you. It was originally an aviation term as fighter pilots needed to be aware of where they were as well as who and what was around them – including whether another plane had hostile intent and what resources or options they had. There are three parts of situational awareness: Be informed, be observant, and be prepared.

Situational awareness is a very lengthy, though important topic. This is why we go into detail on this during our in-person security training. But for those of you who need a refresher on situational awareness, I would recommend two books – both are available on Kindle. The first is *Spotting Danger Before it Spots You* by Gary Quesenberry. The second is *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker. Links for these books are also found in the transcript downloadable from the main podcast page.

The bottom line for this portion of S. I. R. is that self-awareness, cultural awareness, and situational awareness are all important as a bridge between legitimacy and respect. It is part of our incarnational model of intercultural relations and critical to sharing the Gospel in ways that people will understand them. There is no guarantee that this message will be accepted – but when done well, our message will at least be understood.

Now you know.

Next episode we will transition to the last part of Strategic Intercultural Relations: respect. We'll see you then.

Resources

Actor Mapping

The Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF) has an excellent toolkit called “Security to Go”. The second module beginning on page 13 is all about actor mapping. If you would like to take a deeper dive on this subject, we highly recommend clicking on the link below and downloading this free file.

[Security to go: a risk management toolkit for humanitarian aid agencies](#)

Situational Awareness

In this extraordinary groundbreaking book, Gavin de Becker, the nation's leading expert on predicting violent behavior, unlocks the puzzle of human violence and shows that, like every creature on earth, we have within us the ability to predict the harm others might do us and get out of its way. Contrary to popular myth, human violence almost always has a discernible motive and is preceded by clear warning signs.

[The Gift of Fear \(Amazon\)](#)

Continuing the path of *The Gift of Fear*, *Spotting Danger Before It Spots You*, author Gary Quesenberry breaks down the basic techniques necessary to help you develop good situational awareness and increase your levels of personal safety. Gary calls upon his extensive background as a Federal Air Marshal and defensive tactics instructor to explain these methods in simple terms that will greatly improve your general understanding of how, when and where violence occurs. He will then take the next critical step—providing you with the tools you need to properly identify and evade danger before it ever has a chance to materialize.

[Spotting Danger Before It Spots You \(Amazon\)](#)