



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Weoponising Heritage and Archaeology

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Abstract

The deliberate and targeted destruction of cultural heritage and archaeological remains has become notorious in recent years, especially within southwest Asia. The political, ethnic, and sectarian motives that determine the selection of which remains to attack has become increasingly evident and, in some conflicts, increasingly specific. What makes a good target includes the consideration of what will provoke the greatest reaction, or what will cause the greatest cultural damage. The calculation of reaction includes a measure of how a potential target is valued, and who by. There are very clear markers of international value, not least inscription on the World Heritage list. Where potential targets are mainly valued in the West and not by the local population there are particular benefits and fewer disadvantages in their selection. The visible reaction to provocation is the high profile given to attempts to save potential targets from attack, or at least to spend considerable sums of their restoration. We argue that such efforts risk becoming a counter-weaponisation of heritage where destruction/ protection/ reconstruction become part of the competition of conflict. Overt discussion of strategies to protect heritage being 'force multipliers' in planning and training make this militarised role for heritage very evident.

Keywords

Cultural heritage, Weaponisation, Conflict, Destruction

Session

3. Heritage and archaeology

Type of paper

Oral presentation