



# Narrative and National Security

JIM PHELAN, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
<PHELAN.1@OSU.EDU>

# Narrative and Power

- ▶ Narrative is a major tool for interpreting the world
- ▶ Selection, Arrangement, and Emphasis
- ▶ Any Narrative Can be Contested

# Adjudicating Narratives in Contest

- ▶ Appeal to Phenomena to be explained
- ▶ Appeal based in part on position/perspective
- ▶ Those in power shape narratives way different from those out of power
- ▶ Importance of the Source/ Track Records
- ▶ Importance of the Audience
- ▶ Importance of Dissemination

# Mobilization and Intervention

- ▶ Difference between narrative and statistical reports or arguments
- ▶ The power of mimetic-thematic links.
- ▶ Narrative marshals cognition, affect, and value(s) in the service of idea and positions.

# Varying and Clashing Narratives

- ▶ Cultural values underlying narratives will differ and so different groups will tell different stories in support of those values.
- ▶ Cultural value encompasses organizing schemas, ethical beliefs, political positions.
- ▶ Getting at underlying cultural values can help adjudicate differences—or help recognize where adjudication is not possible.