What role does ethnicity play in how people view themselves and their relations with the government? Todd A. Eisenstadt argues ethnicity may have less impact than is usually assumed and outside influences, marked by socioeconomic conditions and land tenure institutions, can trump ideology when framing social movements. What really unites indigenous and non-indigenous communities? How are political identities in the region formed?

These questions will be addressed by professor Eisenstadt in a talk presented by the Center for Inter-American Policy and Research: “Politics, Identity and Mexico’s Indigenous Rights Movement” on March 17, 2011. Based on his most recent and eponymous book (Cambridge University Press 2011) this study draws on an original and comprehensive survey of more than 5,000 respondents in dozens of rural indigenous communities in Southern Mexico.

Prior to joining American University as Department of Government Chair, Eisenstadt was principal researcher of USAID’s Higher Education and Development Program grant, and consultant to the US government and other private development companies. A recipient of Fulbright and National Security Education Program “Boren” fellowships, Eisenstadt’s research has been funded by the Ford and Mellon foundations, and published in several books and journals. He has been a visiting scholar at El Colegio de México in Mexico City, Harvard’s Center for Latin American Studies, the Japan Institute for International Affairs, the University of California, San Diego’s Center for US-Mexican Studies, and, in 2010, at the Latin American Faculty on Social Sciences (FLACSO), in Quito, Ecuador.

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