



THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

The case studies and essays commissioned for this project demonstrate that strategic culture can have a fruitful future although it may not occupy what Colin Gray refers to as its current 'prime time slot' indefinitely. New ideas or events likely will shade its appeal, but there are reasons why strategic cultural analysis should nonetheless endure. Foremost among these is that it provides the basis for an academic enterprise aimed at developing cumulative knowledge about strategic cultures of all types and as a policy means for discerning trends relevant to the varied cultural contexts that the United States and its allies are likely to encounter. Such an endeavor is important because strategic culture can inform those involved in policy about differing approaches to the use of force and the "ways of war," strategic doctrine, and how an actor could behave in crisis situations. It also raises questions about how strategic cultural identities are formed, the role of elites or "leaders" in shaping strategic culture, and the circumstances that lead to change.

A number of theoretical and methodological issues associated with research on strategic culture have thus been considered. An issue that has pervaded this kind of study since its inception is debate over definition: specifically, the lack of agreement on one. The issue was the subject of a 2006 conference where those attending sought to overcome this key problem by considering the various potential elements that might be encompassed in such a definition. The consensus reached was that a definition was available and that strategic culture can be understood as a set of "shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives." The definition consequently acknowledges that strategic culture is a product of a range of circumstances such as geography, history and narratives that shape collective identity, but one which also allows it a role in both enabling and constraining decisions about security. This definition has served as the basis for the respective case studies and also can serve as a framework for further research.

Three distinct areas where strategic culture can contribute to policymaking are: in the

analysis of threats; in considering the cultural context where conflict is underway; and in negotiations aimed at inducing peaceful relations. Each of these areas will have a range of complex factors associated with it but there is likely to be an underlying strategic cultural dimension that also should be incorporated. In the analysis of threats, for example, strategic culture can supplement traditional approaches by allowing the potential for anticipating, although not necessarily predicting, changes in the security environment. Such threats may be global in context but act locally in culturally derived ways. A strategic cultural analysis can therefore assist in considering how to respond to developments like these by exploring different pathways by which this type of threat emerges and devise a range of intervention strategies to suit the particular circumstance. Analyses of this kind may require considerable knowledge of any given actor and it will not be an exact science, but it can contribute to a long-term understanding of the factors that shape strategic cultural identities in a globalizing world.

By way of qualification, too much weight should not be placed on strategic culture. There remain methodological and other theoretical problems associated with this area of study. Yet there are aspects of past and current work that can make a valuable contribution to academic analysis and policymaking. To reiterate two of the major thinkers in this area:

As long as one recognizes that in strategic culture one is “discerning tendencies, not rigid determinants, then the end result should be richer theory and more effective practice.”¹

The final introductory comment concerns the future weapons of mass destruction (WMD) environment. The context in which the study of strategic culture originated was a significant one. The nuclear era was three decades old but already it had seen recurrent crises between the United States and the Soviet Union set against the background of the Cold War. The Cold War ended without conflict, but this was still a critical period for policymaking associated with WMD and the strategic cultural learning that accompanied it. There is concern that the emerging era is more complex because it is coupled with a greater danger of actual WMD use. What can strategic culture provide by way of insights in this area? Bearing in mind the caveat identified above, research can provide knowledge relevant to all aspects of WMD policy: from proliferation trajectories through to deployment and, potentially, use of these weapons.

¹ Ken Booth, “Strategic Culture: Validity and Validation,” *Oxford Journal on Good Governance* 2 (2005): 27, quoting Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Styles*, (Lanham: Hamilton Press, 1986): 35.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Past research on strategic culture has directed attention to the significance of factors such as whether there is a legacy of conflict between groups or states, or whether a state is relatively isolated and surrounded by oceans or is adjacent to a great power. Consequently, the situations where there are two competing states contiguous to each other like India and Pakistan, where the state has witnessed conflict and cooperation over the millennia like China, and where a state has since inception had to strive for its existence in a hostile locality like Israel, will remain central to future analysis. This is because these situations highlight the role that history and geography play in the development of strategic cultural identities.

Where research must continue to innovate is on the question of the dynamics of strategic cultural change. Traditionally, the focus of study has been on continuity or at least semi-permanence in strategic culture. But strategic cultures can and do change, sometimes radically. Those writing on this subject have highlighted a range of factors that may induce change such as what are called “external shocks,” which act as a catalyst for a re-assessment of traditional assumptions about that strategic cultures’ security environment. Such “shocks” can thus effect security policy in unprecedented ways and generate what Jeffrey Lantis refers to as “strategic cultural dilemmas” about how best to respond to the situation. This occurred in Japan following the launch of a ballistic missile in 1998 by North Korea, and was exacerbated by the announcement of the latter state’s first nuclear test in October 2006. Moreover, events of this kind can reverberate on other strategic cultures, both regionally and globally.

There may also be competing groupings or elites within a state that affect strategic cultural identities. If the competition between them intensifies, such as in periods of crisis or political tension, then the groundswell for change may be generated. Coupled to this, narratives often provide the vehicle for such changes to occur.

Work on narratives, both written and oral, has provided key insights into how these allow a particular strategic culture to identify itself in relation to others. They can also precipitate strategic action. Narratives are what Lawrence Freedman refers to as:

...compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn...Narratives are designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events. They are strategic because they do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current...Narratives are about the ways that issues are framed and the responses suggested. They are not

necessarily analytical and, when not grounded in evidence or experience, may rely on appeals to emotion, or on suspect metaphors and dubious historical analogies. A successful narrative will link certain events while disentangling others distinguishing good news from bad tidings, and explain who is winning and who is losing. This usage reflects the idea that stories play an extremely important role in communication, including the ways that organisations talk about themselves.²

Understanding the role of narratives is therefore an important element of analysis, but more research is needed on how other trends will impact on these in the future. None of the previous generations of research on strategic culture, for example, have paid sufficient attention to the processes of globalization and the effects this has on the construction of strategic cultural identity. This is changing, however. Recent studies have begun to focus on the role that technology is playing in assisting transnational terrorist networks as a force multiplier in conducting their operations and in allowing access to WMD-related knowledge. Globalization is also generating different understandings and narratives to those of Western ones concerning the future security realm. There is also the possibility that strategic cultures may be more fluid in circumstances where transnational cultural forces are operating across borders where conflict is underway, thus complicating negotiation of a peaceful settlement. Finally, demographic factors are already impacting on strategic cultural identities and likely will become more significant as a trend in the future. Studies of India, Israel and Russia point to this, while for North Korea the concern is that any collapse of the state would present neighbors with a massive refugee problem.

STRATEGIC CULTURE AND WMD PROLIFERATION TRAJECTORIES

The case studies illuminate several aspects relevant to strategic culture and WMD. Strategic culture research emerged in the 1970s to explain what were considered to be differences in the nuclear strategies adopted by the United States and the former Soviet Union. Jack Snyder, Colin Gray, and others argued that analytical attention should be directed towards national cultural environments in order to understand how nuclear strategy was formulated. Previously, nuclear strategy, as with military strategy in general, was often seen to be governed by technological and other material imperatives. Hence, little credence was given to the

² Lawrence Freedman, "The Transformation of Strategic Affairs," *Adelphi Paper 379*, (London: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006): 22-23.

importance of cultures or ideas in shaping outcomes. Similarly, attempts to understand the dynamics behind nuclear proliferation have traditionally been dominated by theories that focus predominantly on material factors and make assumptions about rationality in the decision-making context.

Since the 1990s more attention has been directed towards other theoretical assessments of strategic nuclear decision-making, including those embracing accounts of the domestic cultural context in which decisions are made. Such accounts indicate that the study of proliferation, as well as analyses of strategic developments among those states already in possession of nuclear weapons, have begun to embrace both cultural and ideational factors. More recently a study by Lewis Dunn, Peter Lavoy, Scott Sagan and James Wirtz investigated the likelihood that any new nuclear states will use WMD according to three models: realism, organizational theory and strategic culture.³ They concluded that organizational theory provided the strongest account of the 3 models, but noted the potential explanatory significance of strategic culture in this context. Around the same period, Max Manwaring called for the old “nuclear theology” relating to deterrence to be replaced “with broad, integrated, and long-term culturally oriented approaches.” Paul Bracken similarly pointed to the need for greater attention to be paid to the role of strategic culture and the potential for WMD use, as the new nuclear states are Asian based.⁴

To facilitate this re-orientation in analysis it is imperative to avoid ethnocentrism and resorting to stereotypes when addressing different strategic cultures. Stereotyping can lead to misperceptions of how a given actor will behave or respond in certain situations. In the WMD environment this could generate uncertainty over intentions and impact on considerations of actual use.

As a basic proposition, ethnocentrism should be minimized but it is not easy to accomplish. Writing in the late 1970s on the relationship between strategy and ethnocentrism Ken Booth considered that ethnocentrism was a source of mistakes, to differing degrees, in both the theory and practice of strategy. For Booth, ethnocentrism had three closely inter-linked meanings:

(1) *As a term to describe feelings of group centrality and superiority.* The

³ Lewis Dunn, Peter R. Lavoy and Scott Sagan, “Conclusion: Planning the Unthinkable,” in Lavoy, Sagan and James J. Wirtz (eds.) *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁴ Max G. Manwaring, ed., *Deterrence in the 21st Century*, (London: Frank Cass, 2001); and Paul Bracken, “The

characteristic features of ethnocentrism in this sense include: strong identification with one's own group as the centre of the universe, the tendency to perceive events in terms of one's own interests, the tendency to prefer one's own way of life (culture) over all others, and a general suspicion of foreigners, their modes of thought, action and motives.

(2) *As a technical term to describe a faulty methodology in the social sciences.* In this technical sense ethnocentrism involves the projection of one's own frame of reference onto others.

(3) *As a synonym for being "culture-bound."* Being culture-bound refers to the inability of an individual or group to see the world through the eyes of a different national or ethnic group: it is the inability to put aside one's own cultural attitudes and imaginatively recreate the world from the perspective of those belonging to a different group.⁵

Policy based around this approach would seek to avoid the extrapolation of Western assumptions to describe non-Western behavior in order to avoid misperceptions, such as where there may be new or evolving WMD situations. But ethnocentrism can also operate both ways with non-Western actors misperceiving the intentions and commitments of Western states, such as over security guarantees and in relation to WMD. The case studies note the differences in the way their particular strategic cultures approach conflict and that there are distinct "ways of war." Ethnocentrism is therefore significant for all situations, especially crisis ones, as the potential for misperception could be high. The study of U.S. strategic culture observes that in the context of discussion surrounding a perceived American aversion to sustaining casualties, "Chinese defense analysts see American casualty sensitivity as a weakness that can be exploited." As Thomas Mahnken emphasizes, however, "this may prove to be a dangerous misperception."

What insights can research on strategic culture provide about different WMD proliferation trajectories? Are there key features in strategic cultures that give indications of when and under what circumstances WMD will be pursued, deployed or used? Much of the literature focusing on strategic culture and WMD has predominantly addressed the nuclear weapons environment. This may be linked to a view that nuclear weapons are the most significant WMD, a perspective that has influenced the direction of study. But what implications

Structure of the Second Nuclear Age," *Orbis*. 47, no. 3, (Summer 2003): 399-413.

⁵ Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, (London: Croom Helm, 1979): 15

does this have for strategic culture and chemical (CW) and biological (BW) weapons? This is an area where more research is required. Are there particular situations where strategic culture factors, such as experience derived from conflict, will lead an actor to seek this category of WMD rather than, or in conjunction with, nuclear weapons? The study of Syria is one of the first to explore this type of relationship, suggesting that a defeat in aerial combat prompted that country to embark on a ballistic missile and CW program as a means of deterrent. Another study has examined cultural and ethical views on WMD, and this can aid understanding of the strategic assumptions that underpin this category of weaponry.⁶

WMD roll back and decisions not to acquire WMD are also important from a strategic cultural perspective. This is because there may be competing pressures within a country that have strategic cultural roots, such as disaffection among elites, or tribal, ideological or religious disagreements that generate the conditions for changes to occur in WMD decision-making. In a study of why Libya abandoned its WMD program, Bruce Jentleson and Christopher Whytock consider that U.S. coercive diplomacy coupled with multilateral support played a major part in the outcome.⁷

The theory of coercive diplomacy suggests that a successful strategy of this sort requires a balance to be struck between proportionality, reciprocity and coercive credibility. As Jentleson and Whytock outline: proportionality “refers to the relationship within the coercer’s strategy between the scope and nature of the objectives being pursued and the instruments being used in their pursuit;” reciprocity “involves an explicit, or at least mutually tacit, understanding of linkage between the coercer’s carrots and the target’s concessions;” and coercive credibility “requires that, in addition to calculations about costs and benefits of cooperation, the coercer state convincingly conveys to the target state that noncooperation has consequences.”⁸

Additionally, they stress that “all three elements of a balanced coercive diplomacy strategy are more likely to be achieved if other major international actors are supportive and if opposition within the coercing state’s domestic politics is limited.”⁹ Jentleson and Whytock emphasize that both the domestic and international environments are significant in a coercive

⁶ Hashmi, Sohail and Lee, Steven, eds., *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Ethikon Series in Comparative Ethics, 2004).

⁷ Bruce W Jentleson and Christopher A. Whytock, “Who ‘Won’ Libya? The Force-Diplomacy Debate and its Implications for Theory and Practice,” *International Security* 30, no. 3, (2005/06): 47-86.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 51-52.

⁹ *Ibid.*: 53.

diplomacy strategy. In the domestic context, whether a target state is susceptible to such a strategy will depend on a range of factors, such as: regime type, particularly if there is an issue of regime self-perpetuation; the economic costs and benefits on that state of sanctions and military force versus inducements like trade and other economic benefits; and the role played by key domestic actors. Where the latter are concerned, they highlight the importance of elites:

Even dictatorships usually cannot fully insulate themselves from elites within their own governments and societies. To the extent that elite interests are threatened by compliance with the coercing state's demands, they will act as “circuit breakers” by blocking the external pressures on the regime. To the extent that their interests are better served by the policy concessions being demanded, they will become “transmission belts” carrying forward the coercive pressure on the regime to comply.¹⁰

Their analysis of the impact of this kind of strategy on Libya's decision to abandon its WMD programs emphasizes the changes that occurred over time in the domestic as well as the international contexts, which they argue was central to the eventual outcome. They note the balance struck between carrots and sticks, including the role played by force, intelligence, multilateral sanctions and economic incentives, and consider how these affected domestic strategic cultural actors like elites as well as tribal affiliations. Finally, in addition to the role that coercive diplomacy played, Wyn Bowen notes the importance of low key diplomatic engagements that took place between the United Kingdom and Libya, especially in the period 1999-2003.¹¹

The issue of who the “keepers” of the strategic culture is thus important for the WMD environment. Studies of particular types of “leadership” may therefore be revealing in terms of decisions to acquire, deploy and use WMD capabilities. Equally, research can provide additional knowledge of the circumstances that lead to a rejection of the WMD route

The work of Jacques Hymans has focused on the role that leaders play in decisions to “endow their states with nuclear weapons.”¹² Hymans argues that while the leaders which have obtained nuclear capabilities for their countries have ranged across the political spectrum and in all parts of the globe, there are particular types of leader that matter: Simply put, some political

¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 54.

¹¹ Bowen, Wyn Q, “Libya and Nuclear Proliferation,” *Adelphi Paper 380* (London: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006).

¹² Jacques Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation. Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 1.

leaders hold a conception of their nation's identity that leads them to desire the bomb; and such leaders can be expected to turn that desire into state policy.¹³

The leadership type he identifies as the significant factor in making nuclear decisions is one he calls "oppositional nationalist". These leaders, he suggests:

...see their nation as both naturally at odds with an external enemy, and as naturally its equal if not its superior. Such a conception tends generate the emotions of fear and pride – an explosive cocktail. Driven by fear and pride, oppositional nationalists develop a desire for nuclear weapons that goes beyond calculation, to self-expression. Thus, in spite of the tremendous complexity of the nuclear choices, leaders who decide for the bomb tend not to back into it. For them, unlike the bulk of their peers, the choice for nuclear weapons is neither a close call nor a possible last resort but an absolute necessity.¹⁴

Hymans has studied nuclear policymaking in France under the Fourth Republic, Australia, Argentina, and India, and draws on insights from areas like political psychology and foreign policy analysis. In so doing, he also aims to construct "a more general model of identity-driven foreign policy decisionmaking," which seeks to trace "the linkages from leaders' national identity conceptions, through emotions, to their ultimate foreign policy choices."¹⁵ Significantly, Hymans considers that decisions to go down the nuclear path stem not from the international structure but from the individual leaders' heart and desires.¹⁶

One question for future strategic culture research is therefore to consider what importance should be attached to leadership and regime transition factors and what happens in situations where regime change either does not proceed smoothly or does not proceed at all. In other words, it would be fruitful to consider further when and under what circumstances strategic cultures change in non-Western contexts, and what impact will this have for WMD. For example, the implications of regime survival are significant in the case of North Korea and, in a different way, for Syria. Additionally, it is important to study the role that strategic cultural factors like symbolism and status play in the acquisition, and possibly deployment and use of nuclear capabilities, as these have been identified in the studies of Russia, India, Iran and North Korea. The study of Pakistan also emphasized the role of nuclear myths, as did the study of India.

Finally, broader issues can impact on strategic culture and WMD. Resource and energy

¹³ *Idem.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 2

¹⁵ *Idem.*

¹⁶ *Idem.*

factors have been a feature of WMD proliferation debates in the past. These appear to be gaining in significance as discussion once more focuses on the role of nuclear power in the future energy debate and is the reason for the attention on Iran's nuclear program. Similarly, for Russia, the case study highlighted that economic power and energy resources are gradually replacing that country's traditional reliance on military power for its security and international status

STRATEGIC CULTURE AND DETERRENCE

What can strategic culture tell us about deterrence and WMD risk-taking in crisis situations? This question continues to be of significance since it was first raised in the 1970s by the first generation of writers on the subject. Today, there are key differences when considering this question: there are more actors, differing capabilities and the cultural contexts in which certain deterrent relationships are emerging are varied. Additionally, where are the ideas concerning deterrence emanating from? Are these essentially emulative (based on past knowledge derived from studying the East-West relationship) or indigenous constructs?

In the conclusion to their edited study of deterrence in the new global security environment, Ian Kenyon and John Simpson outline a number of features that have implications for the kind of analysis considered above. Kenyon and Simpson suggest there are several aspects that have relevance for the evolving nuclear environment:

The first is the distinction between the existence of a deterrent *capability* (itself open to a wide range of interpretations) and of a deterrent *relationship*. Clearly the first is a necessary condition for the second, but it can also exist independently of the second, and increasingly may do so among the established nuclear-weapon states. The second is whether, as Quinlan asserts, deterrence is confined to situations involving *terror* and *unacceptable consequences* or, as others use the term, it also encompasses *defence* and *denial* of the ability to undertake unacceptable actions. Third is the continuing debate between *universal rationality* and *particular strategic cultures* in relation to the mechanisms and effectiveness of deterrence, and the implications for this of threats of mass destructive actions by non-state actors and perceived 'rogue states'. Fourth, there is the question of what, if anything, is understood by the term *strategic stability* in a world of only one nuclear superpower, and an increasing number of small nuclear forces. Finally, there is the role played by *deterrence* and *defence* in combating proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in comparison to that played by *legal constraints*.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ian Kenyon and John Simpson, eds., *Deterrence in the New Global Security Environment* (London: Routledge, 2006): 202.

Aspects of strategic culture underpin all of these considerations. Assumptions about rationality, credibility of threats, appropriate capabilities and the effective communication of threat, as well as strategic stability, are all likely to be affected by the differing contexts now evolving and the strategic cultural predispositions associated with each one. Consider rationality, for example. In theoretical terms, rationality can have at least three understandings: substantive; procedural; and instrumental. Substantive rationality involves judgments about value preferences, such as life over death. Procedural rationality deems a rational choice to be the product of an ends-means calculation, whereby an actor considers every option and judges each one on its merits (including having knowledge of how other actors will respond), before making a choice. Instrumental rationality refers to situations where an actor may have two alternatives and chooses the option that yields the most preferred outcome. The latter variant utilizes assumptions concerning cost-benefit calculations related to threats, punishments, and pay-offs often derived from game-theoretic models involving two players.¹⁸

Given these theoretical models related to rationality, how does strategic culture alter preferences in each? For example, it could be that transnational terrorist actors are not necessarily “irrational;” they may just be operating under differing cultural assumptions about what constitutes a rational act. Actions that may be viewed as irrational in the Western context are consequently rational from the standpoint of their own value-systems and strategic objectives.

In the same edited volume by Kenyon and Simpson, Aaron Karp suggests there are three types of deterrent relationship today: first, there is one that exists between the five nuclear-weapon states, where nuclear weapons serve to prevent use against each other; second, is the variant that is emerging among the new nuclear-weapons capable states; finally, there is the type of deterrence involving terrorist actors.¹⁹ The role of deterrence in each of these contexts is thus variable, with each type displaying features that have a strategic cultural dimension.

Another factor that could influence the development of strategic cultures, especially when connected to WMD, is the influence of global norms. Such norms can exert pressure on some

¹⁸ Frank C. Zagare and D. Mark Kilgour, *Perfect Deterrence*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations no. 72, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000):38-39; and James G. Blight and David A. Welch, “Risking ‘The Destruction of Nations:’ Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for New and Aspiring Nuclear States,” *Security Studies* 4 (Summer 1995): 815, footnote 12.

¹⁹ Aaron Karp, “The New Indeterminacy of Deterrence and Missile Defence,” in Kenyon and Simpson, *op.cit.*: 63-82.

actors but not others in area of WMD. Some analysts have observed that a “nuclear taboo” has evolved since 1945, proscribing the use of nuclear weapons except in cases of last resort. There are differences, however, between those who emphasize interest and material factors to explain non-use and those who attribute this outcome to ideational factors and the development of global norms like the “nuclear taboo.” Mahnken notes the importance, when referring to nuclear weapons, of “the development and growth of a strong American taboo against their use,” and that “American leaders regarded nuclear weapons as different militarily, politically, and psychologically from other weapons almost from the beginning.” Thus, while the US may be constrained by such a “taboo” other strategic cultural actors may not be. Research can therefore continue to delve into this area by studying how the nuclear taboo will operate in the future in differing strategic cultural contexts while also considering those features that may strengthen it as a global norm.

Other factors are influencing strategic cultures and deterrence. For the Russian leadership, nuclear weapons are viewed as essential to security although there is reduced threat perception since the ending of the Cold War. The country is also undergoing a process of demilitarization but there remains a possibility that the old strategic cultural legacy could return if a new charismatic leader or major threat environment were to emerge. The United States still views deterrence and wars for limited aims as a central pillar of its strategic culture but there have been different levels of support between the services for nuclear forces. Key aspects for the United States in the future concern the implications for strategic culture in the context of a process of nuclear re-orientation among the armed forces and the implications in the longer term if nuclear knowledge is lost.

There are contrasting views concerning whether China has a strategic cultural predisposition for the offensive or defensive use of force. This has implications for deterrence, as some analysts also consider that China exhibits a risk-taking style of coercive diplomacy in crisis situations. The nuclear posture currently deployed by China constitutes a relatively small nuclear arsenal compared to the United States and Russia and is not much larger than the ones deployed by the United Kingdom and France. Modernization is underway so that China can attain a secure second strike capability and the Chinese leadership is also concerned about the potential for WMD proliferation to have negative effects on regional security, especially now that North Korea has announced that it has conducted a nuclear test.

North Korea considers that nuclear weapons are necessary to respond to what it perceives are U.S. nuclear threats. There is also strategic cultural dissonance between what it believes the United States will do in terms of WMD use and also the power associated with this class of weapon. Iran similarly is considered to be seeking a nuclear capability to deter the United States, to achieve status and power internationally, and as a symbol of national pride.

CONCLUSION

This type of research can show how strategic cultures of all types influence policy choices and outcomes. Several issues have emerged from this analysis. One is how strategic culture will affect the complexities associated with evolving deterrent relationships. The strategic cultural context in which these are emerging is very different from the 1945-1990 period and the implications of this are profound for future strategic stability. One area for future strategic culture analysis is therefore to study the potentially differing understandings of strategic stability and to assess how the various combinations of missile defense, deterrence, and diplomacy are likely to operate.

One overriding conclusion to stem from recent and past research addressing these issues, which has significance for the security realm, is the need to avoid superficial stereotypes when addressing strategic cultural entities such as states and transnational terrorist actors.²⁰ In the WMD environment this could generate uncertainty over intentions about actual use. Overcoming the trap of ethnocentrism is therefore important for future policy. Concomitantly, ethnocentrism can work both ways: there is a related danger that non-Western actors will misinterpret actions taken by Western states and alliances, and draw the wrong conclusions about what is at stake in any given situation. Future work can ensure that such misinterpretations are minimized.

One question arising from the consideration of how strategic culture can contribute to neorealism is in analyzing whether actors are more likely to acquire WMD in structurally indeterminate situations. Michael Desch accepts that cultural theories might supplement realism by helping explain time lags between structural change and alterations in state behavior, by accounting for why some states behave irrationally and suffer the consequences of failing to adapt to the constraints of the international system", and in helping to explain state action in

²⁰ Elizabeth L. Stone, Christopher P. Twomey and Peter R. Lavoy, Conference Report, "Comparative Strategic Cultures Phase 1 Workshop Proceedings," Prepared by the Center for Contemporary Conflict, U.S. Naval

“structurally indeterminate situations.”²¹ Concerning the latter, Desch writes that:

Structure tends to establish parameters; actual outcomes are sometimes determined by other factors. This makes the competition between cultural and rationalist theories less sweeping but also more intense. In structurally indeterminate environments, culturalist and rationalist theories often make similar predictions about state behavior and international outcomes; thus the crucial cases for deciding between them will be in structurally determinate environments.²²

This represents a fruitful avenue for further research, although a preliminary question would have to be addressed: there would need to be a consensus about what constitutes a structurally indeterminate as opposed to a determinate environment. Additionally, following the work of Hymans, how much emphasis should be placed on individual “leadership” types, as he suggests that it is at this level of analysis that judgments concerning nuclear acquisition should be made.

Research on proliferation has focused on the role of global security norms in constraining both proliferation and use of WMD. It is important to continue analyzing the significance of these norms and whether these constrain all actors. The conclusion thus far is that these norms influence some strategic cultural actors more than others. Moreover, research on individual examples like Libya can yield important observations about the impact of norms, multilateral sanctions, and other policy instruments related to WMD roll-back decisions.

Caution must also prevail in deriving too much from one case of WMD roll back, as there may be specific contextual reasons for the outcome. On this point, Jentlesen and Whytock invoke Alexander George’s two caveats that while cross case comparisons should be made, the focus must be “actor specific,” and that the analyst, “can draw conditional generalizations about what lessons from case X apply to a similar case Y, so long as they also take into account the ways in which the two cases are different.”²³ Nonetheless, Libya has now abandoned its WMD capability and it is useful to consider what factors, cultural or otherwise, played a part in this strategic transformation.

Finally, what also is emerging on the back of current research is the realization of a new strategic cultural analysis that draws on other theoretical traditions but is avowedly oriented

Postgraduate School Monterey, California, 2005.

²¹ Michael Desch, ‘Culture Versus Structure in Post-9/11 Security Studies’, *Strategic Insights IV*, issue 10 (October 2005): 30

²² *Ibid.*:31.

²³ *Ibid.*: 81.

towards addressing policy issues relevant for the twenty first century where a range of actors, including a diversity of types of strategic cultural entities, and globalization are changing the security environment. Whereas it has been common to consider strategic culture in terms of three generations of research, each offering insights into the context in which they evolved, a fourth generation is now focused on identifying how these developments are affecting culturally relevant trends in areas such as WMD and in identifying competing narratives within countries in order to analyze how these shape an actors behavior (rather than ascribing any one permanent cultural condition to that actor). This is because there may be multiple strategic cultures present at any given time. Although strategic culture could be static for years, even decades, it can change dramatically with events or other transformative pressures. The impact of such factors as North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, Iran's nuclear program, the concern that transnational terrorist actors will acquire and use WMD, and the search for global energy solutions in the context of climate change are thus key to understanding individual strategic cultures, regional security dynamics, and global attempts to reduce WMD dangers via treaty- and non-treaty based solutions.

Suggested Reading

- Blight, James G. and David A Welch, "Risking 'The Destruction of Nations:’ Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for New and Aspiring Nuclear States," *Security Studies* 4 (Summer 1995): 815, footnote 12.
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