

## Strategic Culture: Reviewing Recent Literature

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### Introduction

The task of this paper is to outline the main currents of thought that have influenced recent literature on strategic culture. While some analyses use strategic culture without necessarily specifying intended meaning, others are seeking to make the study of strategic culture more rigorous in conceptual and policy relevant terms.

The modern understanding of strategic culture emerged during the East-West Cold War and the immediate period following its denouement. In the western world the texts written in a period from the mid-1970s until the end of 1990s provide an invaluable archive of thinking about how continuity and change influence strategic culture, and what factors should be deemed the most important.

The point of emphasizing the emergence of the modern pantheon of strategic culture is a contextual one. The world underwent profound transformation in the early part of the twentieth century with major wars occurring in Europe that had global ramifications. Later, the Cold War and the advent of the nuclear revolution brought to the fore important writings on realism/neorealism and strategic culture. The Cold War ended without conflict, a major outcome in human history. What can the writings of this period and subsequently inform us of the world we now confront? This question represents the starting position for this paper; and although the focus will be on developments in strategic culture research the impact that realist/neorealist thought continues to have provides a backdrop to this analysis.

The first observation of recent (and much previous) work is that several writers on strategic culture are seeking to develop a richer account of the international environment than the one derived from neorealism. It seeks to accomplish this by emphasizing the domestic cultural context in influencing strategic outcomes. Rather than interpreting behavior solely as a result of constraints and opportunities imposed by the material environment, strategic culture analysts wish to reassert the importance of cultural, ideational, and normative influences on the motivations of states and their leaders. Equally, many also accept that to analyze strategy purely from a cultural position would be inappropriate. Instead, the objective is to explore the range of cultural conditions, which shape the perception strategists have of material conditions.[1]

Another observation of recent literature is noteworthy. While questions still remain for those interested in developing a strategic culture research program efforts are underway to: assess the knowledge gleaned from using both neorealist and strategic culture analyses; develop a more dynamic understanding of culture and consider how this influences strategic outcomes; and, although still rare, compare strategic cultures in a regional and cross-regional setting. At the same time definitional issues have not disappeared and new questions have emerged. Can a research framework be applied to entities that are not states, and what implications do globalization and the Internet have for our understanding of strategic culture? In the post-9/11 world this has policy relevance as analysts are confronted with a conundrum: is it appropriate to apply a strategic culture framework to transnational non-state terrorist networks like al Qaeda or can it be used only for states operating within defined territorial boundaries? Similarly, what implications does this have for regional actors comprising several states like the European Union (EU)?

Developing a consensus on issues such as definition may be important if a coherent research program is to flourish although this should not necessarily preclude collaborative research. Can a definition of strategic culture be found that is acceptable to all? At stake is whether there is a core concept of strategic culture that is generally accepted but still gives rise to dispute about particular interpretations; or whether there is no agreement about an underlying concept and consequently what we are left with is competing conceptions? But even if there was no agreement about an underlying concept there may be possibilities to engage in an enterprise intended to establish "middle range" theoretical and policy relevant knowledge. This is understood as theories that "provide conceptualization and contextualization of issues and cases, trace policy processes, and explain consequences of policy choices."<sup>[2]</sup>

Consequently, this research would seek to identify "common ground" whereby even those from different conceptual and disciplinary orientations collaborate across boundaries in the spirit of developing what Alexander George and Andrew Bennett refer to as "generic knowledge."<sup>[3]</sup> Such knowledge "is most useful when it identifies conditions, processes, and causal mechanisms that link the use of each strategy to variance in its outcomes."<sup>[4]</sup>

## Surveying Recent Literature: Trends and Issues

One reason why strategic culture is often criticized is because of the diversity of definitions that have been used by analysts and the difficulties this has generated for knowledge building. Some writers have adopted a narrow military definition linking it to traditional strategic criteria for considering various possible courses of action to attain a specific objective or qualify this by considering strategic culture only as it applies to the nuclear realm. Additionally, others have preferred to focus on the grand strategies of states and include aspects such as economics and diplomatic ways of attaining a state's objectives in addition to military ones.

There have also been three main approaches to the study of the strategic culture of particular states. The first views strategic culture in terms of its capacity to add greater historical and cultural detail of developments operating within the state but are seeking only to supplement material based analyses centered on interest and the distribution of power. Strategic culture is here understood as a variable that may influence behavior but is regarded as having secondary significance to the material structure.

A second approach is seeking to provide an alternative basis for knowledge of strategic cultures by constructing a methodology that is falsifiable and leads to cumulative research, which can be used for future prediction. This view considers strategic culture to be "an independent variable and behavior as a dependent variable, and pitting the culturalist explanation of behavior against alternative explanations, such as realist and institutionalist ones."<sup>[5]</sup>

Finally, there are those who consider that aspects of human conduct can be understood only by becoming immersed within a culture and consequently the search for falsifiable general statements is unachievable. The objective of this approach is to understand the meanings of both discursive and non-discursive expressions. From this perspective what is unsaid may be as important as verbal statements and non-discursive gestures may be as significant as written evidence. These assumptions led earlier writers to try and understand rather than explain various cultures: that is, to understand what actors meant by their actions. The task was therefore to locate such action within the cultural "form of life" the actor was immersed in.[6]

Recent analyses have also attempted to both improve on the definitional aspect of strategic culture and consider research frameworks that can be applied at the comparative regional level. In a study of strategic culture in the Nordic region, for example, the author's approached strategic culture as a "transnationally nested dynamic interplay between grand strategic discourse and strategic practices." [7] Elsewhere in that volume it is suggested that strategic culture focuses on:

the nexus between the political or strategic and the military or operational dimensions of strategy. The approach is basically an argument for taking a holistic approach to questions of strategy by arguing that they cannot merely be reduced to technical questions (e.g. how to conduct a successful campaign) or reduced to 'a continuation of political intercourse with addition of other means' (Clausewitz, 1976: 605). Military matters constitute a practice in their own right that cannot be reduced to the political purpose for which armed force is deployed; but, on the other hand, this practice cannot be regarded independently of the political rationales of the security policy of which the armed forces are a part.[8]

This study of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden represents a significant collaborative venture between the states in the Nordic region. The analyses reveal many of the traditionally associated sources of strategic culture but is noteworthy also as it was written during changing times: that is, the post-Cold War, post-9/11 international environment. Each of the case studies observed changes in the strategic cultures of their respective countries as a result of these events.

Comparative studies of this kind are still relative few. Most concentrate on individual country studies without making regional or cross-regional comparisons. There may be important reasons for this. One concerns the complexity of this type of analysis as the frames of reference for each case study may be different – the analyses may be comparing like with unlike. Another reason relates to a question common to regional analyses in general: what is the region for the purposes of study? There are several ways of defining a region including by geography, by cultural affinity, by institutional arrangement or by security complex.[9] Determining which states are to be included has impacted on security and arms control dialogues in the past and also affects regional and cross-regional analyses of strategic culture.

In their analysis of an emerging EU strategic culture, Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards adopt a definition related to the institutional identity of the regional actor and the processes by which it uses military force. Consequently, they define strategic culture as:

the political and institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force, coupled with external recognition of the EU as a legitimate actor in the military sphere...[10]

Cornish and Edwards also highlight the post-9/11 environment as representative of a change in policy orientation. Hence, they point to the EU's "capacity and confidence to use military force and non-military coercion as policy tools" in the face of new threats, especially the "post-9/11 campaign against international terrorism", which has 'constituted a vitally important area of operation..."[11]

Analysts have also been considering changes occurring in other parts of the world and whether international structural factors stemming from neorealist theorizing or insights derived from strategic culture research provide the most appropriate means for conceptualizing these changes. Studies of Japan, for example, have focused on the nature of its security policy between 1945 and 1989, and the period since the end of the Cold War.<sup>[12]</sup> By testing this country's security policy with "a constructivist theory of antimilitarism and a realist theory of buck-passing," Jennifer Lind seeks to provide "better foundations for predictions about future Japanese policy."<sup>[13]</sup> Lind considers there have been misunderstandings in assessing Japan's security policy and that this has both theoretical and policy implications as it concerns: underestimations of the level of Japan's military power, especially sea control capabilities; the inability of domestic norms of restraint to inhibit changes in security policy; and the role of a "buck-passing" strategy in explaining the evolution of the military transformation that has occurred.<sup>[14]</sup>

## The Sources of Strategic Culture

Much has been written previously on the sources of strategic culture but it is worthwhile to reconsider such factors, as there have been variations within and between studies. Several sources of strategic culture have been identified encompassing both material and ideational factors. Those most frequently cited are: geography, climate and resources; history and experience; political structure; the nature of organizations involved in defense; myths and symbols; key texts that inform actors of appropriate strategic action; and transnational norms, generational change and the role of technology.

This list alludes to the complexities associated with strategic culture research. Each of the most frequently cited sources is significant in its own right and may have a range of differing understandings and explanations associated with it. This has implications for attempts at theory building as judgment needs to be made about what are the most important factors to be studied and when and how do they influence strategic culture? Additionally, should these be ranked or will it be variable across case studies, regions and the actors involved?

The significance of geography, climate and resources has been a key element in strategic thinking throughout the millennia and remain important sources of strategic culture in the current era. For many, geographical circumstance is the key to understanding why some countries adopt particular strategic policies rather than others. For example, proximity or otherwise to great powers has been viewed as an important factor, as the examples of Norway and Finland exemplified during the Cold War and in previous eras.<sup>[15]</sup> Additionally, many territorial borders are settled by negotiation but others have been forged through conflict and in several parts of the world they are still contested. Some states have multiple borders and may be confronted by different strategic factors at each point of contact with neighboring states: that is, they could have to respond to multiple security dilemmas. Equally, ensuring access to vital resources is an enduring aspect that many view as a significant motivating factor in their strategic considerations. Geographic factors in the context of a changing global territorial and resource landscape consequently continue to exert influence on the makers of strategic policy in the 21st century.

History and experience are also deemed important considerations in the birth and evolution of states, and the strategic cultural identities that comprise them. This presents the analysts of strategic culture with a question: what type of state are you dealing with? International Relations theory has identified several kinds of states ranging from weak to strong, colonial to post-colonial, and pre-modern, modern and postmodern.<sup>[16]</sup> This raises the prospect that different kinds of states may confront different strategic problems and with varying material and ideational resources, apply unique responses.<sup>[17]</sup> For newly-formed states the difficulties of nation-building can compound insecurities and become an important generator of strategic cultural identities. This is not related just to what may be hostile neighbors either acting individually or in concert with others (potentially over disputed territories), but also as a result of other cultural groupings operating from within and beyond these borders. Conversely, for those states of ancient standing

the longevity of their existence may have awoken consecutive leaders to the conditions and contexts that give rise to the rise and fall of great powers or civilizations and adopt policies to suit.

This observation provokes the question of what should be the historical starting point for research because this also varies between studies. Some take the long view by tracing particular factors that have influenced strategic cultural identities over time, possibly millennia. Others adopt a more limited timeframe and focus on recent events that have transformed strategic cultural identities such as conflict or other catastrophic incursions. In this context, the end of the East-West Cold War and the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 and in other parts of the world subsequently have raised new questions about the emerging strategic environment and the policy responses necessary both now and in the future.

Another source of strategic culture is the nature of a country's political structure and those organizations involved in defense. An earlier study highlighted the following questions in this context:

What traditionally have been the most important features of the country's political system? Has it been liberal-democratic or communist, centralized or decentralized, open or closed, pluralist or dominated by narrow elites? Is there a tradition of stability or instability? Has the system undergone any radical change? Has public opinion had much of a role to play in policy-making? Have the armed forces involved themselves in politics? Can any generalizations be made about the type of polity and its military behavior?[18]

These questions raise significant issues for the analyst of strategic culture as political structures have taken various forms throughout the world. Some adopt a broadly Western liberal democratic style of government others do not. Some are considered mature democracies while others are undergoing democratic transformation and are in various stages of consolidation. Where the latter are concerned there may be cultural variables such as tribal, religious or ethnic allegiances that operate within and across territorial boundaries, which determine the pace and depth of consolidation.

Similarly, many regard defense organizations as being critical to strategic cultures but differ over the precise impact these have. Studies of the Nordic region have revealed that issues such as whether the forces are professional or conscript and their experiences in conflict are significant. Emphasis was also placed on the role of doctrinal, civil-military relations and procurement practices. For example, when focusing on previous debates concerning doctrines in grand strategy, two central insights are made:

The first is that both civil and military logics make it unlikely for any concept of 'grand strategy' to be applied in its entirety. The other insight is that any 'grand strategy' worthy of its name must not be allowed to develop in continuation of tactics and strategy, as a purely military pursuit, but must on the other hand be explicated on the basis of general, political goals.[19]

Similarly, where civil-military relations are concerned, it is argued the debate is not so much about military doctrines, "but the preconditions for the deployment and the kind of rationality that is at stake in those deployments." [20]

Myths and symbols are considered be part of all cultural groupings. Both are viewed as relevant as these can act as a stabilizing or destabilizing factor in the evolution of strategic cultural identities. The notion of "myth" can have meaning different from the traditional understanding as something "unfounded or false." [21] John Calvert writes that it can also refer to:

A body of beliefs that express the fundamental, largely unconscious or assumed political values of a society—in short, as a dramatic expression of ideology. The details narrated in a political

myth may be true or false; most often they meld truth and fiction in ways that are difficult to distinguish. What is important, however, is that the myth's narrative elements are perceived and embraced as true. To be effective, political myth must engage not reason, but belief and faith.[22]

Work on symbols has also suggested that these act as "socially recognized objects of more or less common understanding" and which provide a cultural community with stable points of reference for strategic thought and action.[23]

Many analysts regard key texts as important in informing actors of appropriate strategic thought and action. Traditional analyses of peace and conflict have long pointed to the influence of such texts throughout history and in different cultural settings. These may follow a historical trajectory from Sun Tzu, who was considered to have written the *Art of War* during the time of the warring states in ancient China, through the writings of Kautilya in ancient India, and into western understanding as a result of Thucydides' commentary on the Peloponnesian Wars and Clausewitz's writings on the nature of war as a result of observations of the Napoleonic period.

Concomitantly, writers on strategic culture have identified other sources of knowledge that may be in competition with these writings. Studies of particular countries have observed the oscillating influence of two distinct strategic traditions. In a study of Greece the author identified this as operating between the followers of Achilles and those who revere Odysseus. On the one hand there are the 'traditionalists', who derive their intellectual sustenance from the exploits of Achilles, hero of the *Iliad*, and who view the world as an anarchic arena where power is the ultimate guarantee of security. On the other hand there are the 'modernists', followers of Odysseus the hero of Homer's epic poem, *Odyssey*, who although viewing the world as an anarchic environment consider that Greece's best strategy is to adopt a multilateral cooperative approach to peace and security.[24] This is a dualism in strategic culture that reflects the influence of long held myths and legends, which continue to find resonance in the modern era.

Analyses of Sweden and Denmark have also revealed two forms of strategic culture. In the case of Sweden the first form emphasizes professional and technologically advanced forces for its military, while the second revolves around notions of a people's army based on conscription and the democratic involvement of citizens of the state.[25] Where Denmark is concerned the two forms have been labeled cosmopolitanism and defencism. Cosmopolitanism stresses neutrality, alternative non-military means of conflict resolution and the importance of international institutions such as the former League of Nations and the United Nations. In contrast, defencism emphasizes the importance of military preparedness encapsulated in the dictum 'if you want peace, you must prepare for war' and the importance of regional military organizations, such as NATO, in defending the country and deterring would be aggressors. After the Second World War, a compromise was reached between these two alternative perspectives under a policy of "deterrence" based on the principle of a strong defence bolstered by membership of NATO.[26]

Finally, transnational norms, generational change and technology are also regarded as important sources of strategic culture. Transnational norms are said to define 'the purpose and possibilities of military change' and in providing guidance concerning the use of force.[27] Theo Farrell has considered how transnational norms (in his case, those relating to military professionalism), have influenced national norms and the process by which this occurs.[28] Farrell considers that transnational norms can be transplanted into a country's cultural context either through a process involving pressure on a target community to accept the new norms (termed "political mobilization"), or by a process of voluntary adoption (termed "social learning"). Norm transplantation, as Farrell refers to it, can thus occur via a process of incremental adoption over time eventually achieving a cultural match between the transnational and national norms.

Conversely, such a process of transplantation can occur through radical means, which induces major cultural change within a specific community. Radical norm transplantation may be generated in three ways: the first is by an "external shock to the local cultural system—in the form

of wars, depression and revolutions;" the second is by "norm entrepreneurs," individuals who, the closer they are "to the decision-making apparatus of the target community, the better they will be able to communicate and push through new ideas;" and the third is through 'personnel change' such that innovative thinkers gain access to influential positions and are able to introduce new ideas to the policy-making process.

Both generational change and technology, particularly information and communications technology (ICT), can have important ramifications for issues of empowerment and strategic reach. The arrival of the Internet is a relatively recent phenomenon yet there are now generations who have grown up with this medium of information and communication. This is also a world of individual and group empowerment that is both global in scope and potentially unique in its implications as a dual use technology. While ICT has transformed societies, it has also allowed individuals or groups to communicate in novel ways and cause disruption at a distance.

### Are strategic cultures immutable or do they change over time ?

Some strategic culture research has been criticized for adopting an essentialist conception of culture that assumed coherent cultural entities with clearly defined boundaries largely impermeable to change. This research is also said to have adopted a deterministic view of the relationship between culture and behavior making it difficult to assess the causal relevance of strategic culture.[29] This is a complex issue, as it raises the question of how to understand the dynamic relationship between cultural identities, different types of behavior and strategic outcomes. As one writer has commented:

Cultures can never really be described in their entirety, partly because they are too complex and dynamic. In practice, seeing through the cultural maze requires the identification of cultural totems: the images, meanings, norms, values, stories, and practices that seem particularly significant in determining what political or social life looks like....Culture can help us understand why humans act the way they do, and what similarities and differences exist among them.[30]

Recent analysis has started to utilize developments in sociological and anthropological theory to provide a more dynamic understanding of culture. This work seeks to challenge 'the distinction between behavior and culture' by considering "culture as practice." [31]

Iver Neumann and Henrik Heikka consider that previous work on strategic culture has been using an outdated and reified concept of culture. This, they argue, has consequences for research as, "the literature on strategic culture does not (yet) give us the kind of dynamic and specific framework for empirical analysis that we need." [32] Using the work of writers on practice theory, Neumann and Heikka seek to develop such a framework whereby "practice and discourse constitute a culture." [33] Discourse is understood as "a system for the formation of statements" (quoting Jens Bartelson), whereas practice is taken to be "socially recognized forms of activity, done on the basis of what members learn from others, and capable of being done well or badly, correctly or incorrectly" (quoting Barry Barnes). [34]

Neumann and Heikka apply this notion of culture to the strategic realm by considering its use in the context of grand strategy, which they argue is also in need of disaggregation. [35] Their intention is to accomplish this "by reconceptualizing 'grand strategy' from being a coverall term on a par with strategic culture, to being a coverall term for all *preconditions* for action." [36] Grand strategy, thus reformulated is understood as, "a set of preconditions for action, at a specific time, in a specific place, that may exist in more or less explicit and systematized form, and that is actualized in practices." [37] Neumann and Heikka acknowledge that at this stage the model "still treats culture as a clearly bound and homogeneous phenomenon," so they augment it "in such a way that strategic culture emerges not as the stable product of a homogeneous process inside a

clearly limited nation-state, but rather as an unstable compromise of a contested transnational type."[\[38\]](#)

In the same volume, Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen writes that this reconceptualization has significance for analyses of strategic cultures of states other than great powers:

Practice theory makes it possible to study how changes in the international order not only give a minor power like Denmark new possibilities for action but how these possibilities for action influence and are influenced by existing discourse on the country's place in the world. Responding to the end of the Cold War is not just a matter of how Denmark uses new possibilities given by structural conditions, but also a matter of how Denmark establishes a practice for using them. New possibilities for action are thus not only opportunities which states automatically utilizes, but rather shocks that, using Ann Swidler's term, 'unsettle' the existing culture. In such unsettled periods, practice and discourse are unhinged because they no longer co-constitute a culture but rather challenge one another. The result can be a new culture, but the existing one can also settle in a new pattern in which the relationships between discourses are redefined to fit a new practice.[\[39\]](#)

### **Can transnational actors have strategic cultures?**

Can a research framework be applied to anything that is not a state and what implications do globalization and the Internet have for our understanding of strategic culture? It was noted earlier that some consider there is an evolving EU strategic culture operating at the regional level: but can this apply to non-state actors operating across territorial boundaries where identities may be formed in the realms of both physical and cyberspace.

The advent of the cyber revolution has generated several issues concerning our understanding of conflict and security.[\[40\]](#) Emily Goldman writes that threats to cyberspace, "range from the systematic and persistent, to the decentralized and dispersed, to the accidental and non-malevolent."[\[41\]](#) Additionally, while acknowledging that the technologies associated with globalization have enable terrorist groups to conduct operations that "are deadlier, more distributed, and more difficult to combat than those of their predecessors," James Kiras argues that these same technologies "can be harnessed to defeat terrorism by those governments with the will and resources to combat it."[\[42\]](#)

At the turn of the millennium Victor Cha identified what he termed a "globalization-security' spectrum.[\[43\]](#) At one end of this spectrum Cha placed grand strategic options related to the ending of the East-West rivalry, because these were derived 'from the end of bipolar competition rather than from globalization." At the other end were those aspects derived from globalization's security effects, which had heightened "the salience of substate extremist groups or fundamentalist groups because their ability to organize transnationally, meet virtually, and utilize terrorist tactics has been substantially enhanced by the globalization of technology and information."[\[44\]](#) As Cha encapsulated it:

The most far-reaching security effect of globalization is its complication of the basic concept of 'threat' in international relations. This is in terms of both agency and scope. Agents of threat can be states but can also be non-state groups or individuals.[\[45\]](#)

Thus for Cha, the advent of "instantaneous communication and transportation, exchanges of information and technology, flow of capital—catalyze certain dangerous phenomena or empower certain groups in ways unimagined previously."[\[46\]](#)

John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt have also argued that "the information revolution is altering the nature of conflict across the spectrum."[\[47\]](#) They identify two related developments, which

concern both changes to organizational structures and how we understand conflict. As they characterize the situation: first, "network forms of organization" now have the advantage "over hierarchical forms; and second, as this 'revolution deepens, the conduct and outcome of conflicts increasingly depend on information and communication."<sup>[48]</sup> Consequently, they consider that, "information-age threats are likely to be more diffuse, dispersed, multi-dimensional nonlinear, and ambiguous than industrial-age threats."<sup>[49]</sup>

Some have noted the possible parallels between traditional types of terrorism and those relating to cyberspace, including, "the diversity of actors involved, the reliance of at least some of them on networks, the broad range of motivations, the anonymity of the perpetrators of terrorist incidents....and the enormous array of potential targets and weapons."<sup>[50]</sup>

Do these developments imply that transnational non-state terrorist actors can have a strategic culture? This could depend on the approach to strategic culture adopted. If the approach considers that strategic cultures apply to actors that have a material basis, especially a defined territory, then only states could be included in the framework. Conversely, if ideational factors such as myths and symbols are deemed important and that these gain significance transnationally and via new communication modes such as cyberspace, then this approach could encompass such actors. Additionally, this also resonates with the issue of whether terrorist groups should be treated as armed bands. As Joseph McMillan comments:

The trend in the United States since 9/11 has increasingly been to view terrorists more as armed enemies and less as criminals – in other words, to treat them primarily as an opposing armed force, albeit an unlawful one. The word 'primarily' is important, because the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. In fact, Abraham D. Sofaer and Paul R. Williams have aptly described terrorism as 'unconventional warfare conducted by unprivileged combatants with the assistance of criminal co-conspirators designed primarily to terrorize and kill civilians.' The question is whether that approach is appropriate and justified. In answering that question, two criteria have to be considered. The first is definitional: is the term 'armed force' applicable to terrorist groups in general or only to one terrorist groups in particular? The second is utilitarian: is treating terrorist groups as armed forces strategically useful?<sup>[51]</sup>

## **Strategic culture: developing a framework for the future?**

Works on strategic culture have not been that numerous in recent years, yet those that have been produced offer suggestions in overcoming some of the problems identified with this kind of analysis. This body of work is seeking to develop greater theoretical precision to allow for the possibility of gaining insights into the future strategic realm. It has also embraced developments in other disciplines and while such analysis could be charged with becoming more eclectic, this can also be interpreted as a positive virtue. There is research strength in developing an approach to strategic culture that allows for the accumulation of inter-disciplinary knowledge in individual country, regional, cross-regional and transnational settings.

Much research still needs to be done to provide detailed studies of strategic cultures for the purposes of comparative case studies. At the same time, one caveat is that in seeking to identify causal relations there is a risk of over-simplifying the social world and consequently categories from one case may be applied inappropriately to others. An inadequate knowledge of a given strategic culture may lead to the misinterpretation of the various attributes of notions such as pride, honor, duty and also security and stability.

One method that may allow for cumulative research is process tracing, which involves "theoretically informed historical research to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to an outcome."<sup>[52]</sup> As George and Bennett have outlined:

process-tracing is one means of attempting to get closer to the mechanisms or microfoundations behind observed phenomena. Process-tracing attempts to empirically establish the posited intervening variables and implication that should be true in a case if a particular explanation of that case is true. Theories or models of causal mechanisms must undergird each step of a hypothesized causal process for the process to constitute a historical explanation of the case'.[\[53\]](#)

The task for the researcher is to trace the processes that could have generated a strategic outcome in particular case studies. This method will produce several observations within each case, which "must be linked in particular ways to constitute an explanation of the case."[\[54\]](#)

Another theoretical move that George and Bennett advocate is "the development of contingent generalizations about combinations or configurations of variables that constitute theoretical types..."[\[55\]](#) Typological theorizing as they refer to it "allows for cross-case comparisons/studies which can be integrated with within-case methods to allow structured iterations between theories and cases."[\[56\]](#) The "hallmark of a fruitful and cumulative typological theory is the refinement of contingent generalizations that differentiate both independent and dependent variables in ways that produce increasingly close similarity of cases within each type, as well as sharper distinctions between types."[\[57\]](#)

Considering strategic culture as "a dynamic interplay between discourse and practice" also offers a means for accommodating the issue of the mutable nature of strategic culture. Similarly, it could illuminate both how strategic culture evolves from generation to generation and is transformed by competing groups through negotiation and debate. Studies outlined in this paper have also identified that at least two strategic cultures within a state historically compete with each other for dominance. An emphasis on discourse and practice could illuminate when, how and why one form of strategic culture challenges another during critical periods of a state's history. Often, both generational change and paradigm competition go hand in hand so that the older generation maintains its faith in the dominant strategic culture while the new generation adopts the opposing form.[\[58\]](#)

In order to gain a better insight into the nature of any one state's strategic culture and what influences continuity and change may thus require a combination of analytical methods. One conclusion may therefore be that strategic cultures are generally slow to change and consequently exhibit a persistence and continuity over time, but that ideas, discourse, norms and the influence of new generations play a significant role. An emphasis on these factors may further our understanding of the processes that induce change in strategic cultures.[\[59\]](#)

Finally, the impact of transnational non-state terrorist actors and whether strategic cultural research can illuminate their actions is also crucial to this research endeavor. Much has been accomplished already in responding to the challenges the post-9/11 world has engendered. This should not be overlooked, but the world does not stand still and neither do strategic cultures. In a globalized and technologically dynamic environment where material and ideational forces are at work this could be the key to developing future policies. As George and Bennett have suggested what is needed are:

More discriminating 'actor-specific' behavioral models...that recognize that an adversary is not a unitary actor, but often includes a number of individuals who may differ in important ways in their analysis and opportunities to be considered in deciding policy. Similarly, the particular rationality of an opponent may reflect values, beliefs, perceptions, and judgments of acceptable risk that differ from those of the side that is attempting to influence its behavior. Simple assumptions that one is dealing with rational or unitary actors may be particularly dangerous when one is trying to deal with *non-state actors*, such as warlords, terrorists, or rivals in civil wars.[\[60\]](#)

Further research could therefore seek to integrate the knowledge gleaned into threat assessments; and analyses of trends in strategic cultures of all types could seek to identify changes occurring over time, be forewarned when new challenges emerge and be as well prepared as pragmatically feasible to respond when the time comes.

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Dr. Darryl Howlett is Senior Lecturer at the University of Southampton. His research interests include issues in contemporary arms control, global security, and the politics of the environment. He earned his Ph.D. in 1988 at the University of Southampton, his M.Sc. in 1983 at the University of Lancaster, and his B.Sc. in 1982 at the University of East Anglia.

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7. "Introduction," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005), special issue on Strategic Culture in the Nordic region.
8. Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, "[What's the Use of It?: Danish Strategic Culture and the Utility of Armed Force](#)," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005): 70.
9. The notion of a regional security complex is taken from Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003). This analysis keeps the "security dynamics at the global level analytically distinct from those at the regional level" while the theoretically it seeks to "expunge Eurocentric elements and produce a general theory of regional security," 14 and 42.
10. Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards, "The strategic culture of the European Union: a progress report," *International Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2005): 801-820.

11. Cornish and Edwards, *Op. Cit.*, 814 and 809.
12. Yuri Kase, "Japan", in John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore, eds., *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture*: 129-152; Christopher W. Hughes, "[Japan's Re-emergence as a 'Normal' Military Power](#)," *Adelphi Paper* 368-9, (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, November 2004); Robert Pekkanen and Ellis S. Krauses, "Japan's 'Coalition of the Willing' on Security Policy," *Orbis*, 49, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 429-444; Tomohiko Taniguchi, "A Cold Peace: the changing security equation in Northeast Asia," *Orbis* 49, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 445-457; and Michael R. Auslin, "Japan and South Korea: The New East Asian Core," *Orbis* 49, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 459-473.
13. Jennifer M. Lind, "Pacifism or Passing the Buck? Testing Theories of Japan's Security Policy," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 92-121.
14. Lind considers that in terms of 'predictions from the antimilitarist and buck-passing theories', the latter 'performs substantially better', Lind, *Ibid.*
15. Nina Graeger and Halvard Leira, "Norwegian Strategic Culture after World War II. From a Local to a Global Perspective," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005): 45-66 and Henrikki Heikka, "Republican Realism. Finnish Strategic Culture in Historical Perspective," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005): 91-119.
16. Buzan and Weaver, *Regions and Powers, Op. Cit.*, 20-26.
17. Colin Gray comments that, "different political and strategic cultures confront distinctive geostrategic problems through the prisms of their individual historical circumstances, and with unique sets of assets and liabilities, will make somewhat individual choices." Colin S. Gray, "The American Revolution in Military Affairs: An Interim Assessment," *The Occasional*, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Wiltshire, UK (1997): 28.
18. Alan Macmillan and Ken Booth, "Appendix: Strategic Culture – Framework for Analysis," in Ken Booth and Russell Trood, *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 366.
19. Neumann and Heikka, *Op. Cit.*, 16.
21. The argument is that this can be studied in the context of civil-military practices where the focus is on such questions as, 'standard operating procedures for formal and informal relationships between the political and military leaderships (on the state as well as on the supra- and sub-state levels), budgetary practices...and...officer-soldier relations and the gendering of the military.' Neumann and Heikka, *Ibid.*, 16.
21. John Calvert, "The Mythic Foundations of Radical Islam," *Orbis* (Winter 2004).
22. *Ibid.*
23. Charles Elder and Roger Cobb, quoted in Stuart Poore, "Strategic Culture," in John Glenn, Darryl Howlett and Stuart Poore, *Neorealism versus Strategic Culture, Op. Cit.*, 63.
24. Nikolaos Ladis, "Assessing Greek Strategic Thought and Practice: Insights from the Strategic Culture Approach," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Southampton, UK, 2003.

25. Gunnar Aselius, "[Swedish Strategic Culture after 1945](#)," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1, (2005): 25-44.
26. Rasmussen, *Op. Cit.*
27. Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, eds., *The Sources of Military Change. Culture, Politics, Technology*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 7.
28. Theo Farrell, "[Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army](#)," *European Journal of International Relations* 7, (2001): 63-102.
29. Neumann and Heikka, *Op. Cit.*, 8.
30. Simon Murden, "Culture in World Affairs," in John Baylis and Steve Smith, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics*, third edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 540.
31. Rasmussen, *Op. Cit.*, 71.
32. Neumann and Heikka, *Op. Cit.*, 6.
33. Rasmussen, *Op. Cit.*, 71.
34. Neumann and Heikka, *Op. Cit.*, 11.
35. "The points behind performing this disaggregation are two: (a) we are able to identify building blocks that are familiar to students of strategic studies, thus splicing together general social theory with a tradition in the study of security and defence policy; (b) we are better able to specify the concepts of culture, discourse and practice in a strategic setting, and to model the relationships between them. The point is to follow Swidler's shift of attention 'down' from conscious ideas and values ---such as the idea of grand strategy -- to the physical and the habitual, and also 'up' from ideas located in individual consciousness to the impersonal arena of 'discourse'," Neumann and Heikka, *Ibid.*, 12.
36. *Ibid.*, 13.
37. *Ibid.*, 14.
38. *Ibid.*, 17.
39. Rasmussen, *Op. Cit.*, 71-72.
40. Gregory J. Rattray, "[The Cyberterrorism Threat](#)," in Russell D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism. Understanding the New Security Environment*, (Guildford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill, 2002): 221-245; Stuart J.D. Schwartzstein, ed., *The Information Revolution and National Security. Dimensions and Directions*, (Washington D.C., The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), and *Cybercrime, Cyberterrorism and Cyberwarfare: Averting an Electronic Waterloo*, (Washington D.C., The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1998).
41. Emily O. Goldman, "Introduction: Security in the Information Technology Age," in Emily O. Goldman, ed., "National Security in the Information Age," special issue, *Contemporary Security Policy* 24, no. 1 (April 2003) 1.

42. James D. Kiras, "Terrorism and globalization," in John Baylis and Steve Smith, eds., *The Globalization of World Politics. An Introduction to International Relations*, 3rd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 479.
43. Victor D. Cha, "[Globalization and the Study of International Security](#)," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 3 (2000): 391-403.
44. Cha, *Ibid.*, 392. See also, Audrey Kurth Cronin, "[Behind the Curve. Globalization and International Terrorism](#)," *International Security* 27, no. 3, (Winter 2002/03): 30-58 (especially 46-48).
45. Cha, *Ibid.*, 393.
46. Cha, *Ibid.*, 394.
47. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, eds., [Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy](#) 1, no. 1 (2001). See also, Athina Karatzogianni, "The Politics of 'Cyberconflict,'" *Politics. Surveys, Debates and Controversies in Politics* 24, no. 1 (February 2004): 46-55.
48. Arquilla and Ronfeldt, [Op. Cit.](#), 1.
49. Arquilla and Ronfeldt, [Networks and Netwars](#), 2.
50. Phil Williams, Timothy Shimeall and Casey Dunleavy, "[Intelligence analysis for internet security](#)," *Contemporary Security Policy* 23, no. 2 (August 2002): 13.
51. Joseph McMillan, "Treating Terrorist Groups as Armed Bands: The Strategic Implications," in Jason S. Purcell and Joshua D. Weintraub, eds., *Topics in Terrorism: Toward a Transatlantic Consensus on the Nature of the Threat* (Washington D.C.: Atlantic Council of the United States, July 2005), 26.
52. "Causal relations may be inferred from historical observation, but historical research must be informed by theory to identify the *mechanisms* responsible for producing causation between independent and dependent variables." Theo Farrell, "[Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait of a Research Program](#)," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (2002): 61-2
53. George and Bennett, *Op. Cit.*, 147.
54. *Ibid.*, 207.
55. *Ibid.*, 233.
56. "We define a typological theory as a theory that specifies independent variables, delineates them into the categories for which the researcher will measure the cases and their outcomes, and provides not only hypotheses on how these variables operate individually, but also contingent generalizations on how and under what circumstances they behave in specified conjunctions or configurations to produce effects on specified dependent variables. We call specified conjunctions or configurations of the variables 'types'...Typological theories specify the pathways through which particular types related to specified outcomes." *Ibid.*, 235.
57. *Ibid.*, 235. They suggest that an "important advantage of typological theorizing is that it can move beyond earlier debates between structural and agent-centered theories by including within a single typological framework hypotheses on mechanisms leading from agents to structures and

those leading from structures to agents. This allows the theorist to address questions of how different kinds of agents (individuals, organizations, or states, depending on the level of analysis) behave in and change various kinds of structures." *Ibid.*, 245.

58. Darryl Howlett and John Glenn, "Epilogue: Nordic Strategic Culture," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 1 (2005): 129.

59. *Ibid.*, 131.

60. George and Bennett, *Op. Cit.*, 273.