

Finally, strategic cultural influences can perhaps have the largest impact on how a state chooses to pursue its security. Again, this has an internal and external dimension. From the domestic side, recent experiences of war can affect the orientation towards unilateral or mutual, forceful or peaceful, means to achieve greater security. From a more structural perspective, the particular social weight and role of the armed forces can shape both security policies themselves, and the influence of other actors on security policy-making. Externally, the existence of a regional affinity community (ethnic or other) that shapes perceptions of living in a basically hostile or friendly world, or images of potential enemies and threats, can crucially circumscribe the scope of security-building efforts. The question of whether or not a state's/society's strategic culture is laden with ethnocentric influences (crude images of the enemy, polarized disputes, a posture of superiority, an insensitivity to the impact of one's actions), and whether or not current doctrine and policy recognize the mutuality and interdependence of security, may also be crucial to the way in which it defines and pursues its security interests.

Not all questions proved to be relevant to each of the case studies that follow, and individual cases are cast often towards exploring different elements in greater detail. For example, J.D. Yuan's and Andrew Latham's respective explorations of Chinese and Indian security cultures draw more extensively on strategic cultural elements that have deep historical roots (Confucian versus Mencian; and Kautilyan versus Gandhian traditions), while Amitav Acharya's study of "the ASEAN way" focuses on the way in which relatively "new" states have created and promoted a distinctive identity that draws upon some traditions, but is (more importantly) a conscious project of political elites. Hal Klepak's study of Latin America by contrast, emphasizes political cultural elements, in particular patterns of civil-military relations and the legalist/authoritarian heritage. Finally, Gabriel Ben-Dor's and Ahmed Fakhri's studies of the Middle East place a strong accent on patterns of conflict and enmity between neighbours, and the way in which cultural elements, although present for all to see, are overshadowed by the impact of the legacy of fifty years of war on contemporary efforts to find common ground.

Conclusion

There is an emerging consensus that "culture," however defined, plays an important role in shaping international political behaviour and the prospects for security-building in the post-Cold War era. Culture is, however, only one element in the complex of interests and ideas that affect multilateral regional and global negotiations, and the cooperation and competition between states, and perhaps only seldom is it the most important one. But despite the fact that the cultural elements of international relations are particularly difficult to pin down, the widely shared perception among policy makers in different regions that they have assumed a larger role in multilateral dialogues makes some attempt to come to grips with the cultural dimension of the multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and security-building processes essential. The case studies that follow are an important step towards this goal.