

without knowing which kind of power is being discussed--personal, political, or physical.²¹

Obviously, pure translation problems can often be clarified, although even here, as the case of Security Council Resolution 242 on the Arab-Israeli conflict makes clear, matters are not always straightforward.²² But more importantly, the whole nexus of meanings behind concepts such as "family leave" or "female empowerment" make little or no sense outside of the particular (and in this case Western) cultural matrix from which they emerged (a certain concept of the family, of equality, of the role of women, and so forth), despite the existence of a shared diplomatic culture through which they were expressed. The same might turn out to be true for such ideas as "transparency," "verification," and "confidence-building," so dear to the arms control community.

Political Culture

The point that diplomats and negotiators find themselves operating in multiple and overlapping "cultures" leads directly to the "political cultural" dimension of international politics. The notion of political culture was elaborated primarily to explain differences in domestic political institutions and arrangements, and to uncover the societal underpinnings of particular political debates.²³ In the United States, for example, the influence of the Bill of Rights on norms of free speech, the debate over social issues such as abortion, or the constitutional underpinnings of the debate over gun control, all illustrate elements of political culture. As a more fuzzy level, ideas of "can-do," "straight talk," the "frontier mentality," or "the self-made man" all exercise some, albeit ill-defined, impact on American political life. Obviously, similar points could be made about the impact of Ghandianism and colonialism on Indian political life, the "mandate from heaven" in Confucian rule, the "two solitudes" in Canadian politics, or the "caudillo" legacy of Spanish rule in Latin America.

Of course, one must be cautious in deploying such fuzzy notions to explain actual political outcomes. Often, so-called political cultural variables are used to explain everything about a nation's political life, in which case they actually explain nothing. Likewise, an undue focus on such aspects can lead to a neglect of the impact of the interests and power of different actors (such as the National Rifle Association, or conservative religious groups in America) on outcomes. What is important to note here is that political cultural influences are not confined to these vague ideas (which in any case find very different expressions at different historical periods), and are actually mediated through the filter of political institutions and

²¹ Karen Mingst and Craig Warkentin, "What Difference Does Culture Make in Multilateral Negotiations?" *Global Governance*, 2 (1996), 171, from Peter Waldman, "Lost in Translation: How to 'Empower Women' in Chinese," *Wall Street Journal*, 13 September 1994.

²² The French text of that resolution calls for withdrawal from "des territoires occupé," which connotes "all of the occupied territories (as does apparently also the Russian and Arabic text), while the English text, which reads "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict," does not connote necessarily all of them. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, article 1.

²³ As one author defines it, political culture refers to "that complex of attitudes and practices...which reflects both the historical evolution of society and the psychological reactions to social change of the society's political actors." Lucian Pye, cited in Ball, "Strategic Culture," 45. See also Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *American Political Science Review*, 82 (1988), 1203-1230; Harry Eckstein, "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change," *The American Political Science Review*, 82:3 (September, 1988).