

reject elements of their own), and underplay the real issues at stake that have brought individuals, groups or states to a negotiation or a dialogue.¹⁷

One way to get beyond culture writ large is to look at more focused manifestations of cultural factors. In this respect, the idea of "culture" has been modified by at least three adjectives that provide good entry points for International Relations and security studies analysts: diplomatic culture, political culture and strategic culture. Elements of all three of these could be relevant for grasping the potential and pitfalls of processes of arms control, non-proliferation and confidence and security-building, but each must be carefully distinguished.

Diplomatic Culture

"Diplomatic culture" generally refers to the rules of conduct that govern the interactions of state representatives in formal and informal contexts. These include specific procedures and protocols, the use of a particular terminology in agreements and more general "signals" between states.¹⁸ To an outsider, these procedures, terms or signals can appear incomprehensible or pointless; to insiders, they perform a critical function in smoothing the operation of the multilateral system and reducing the possibility of misunderstanding and misperception. For example, the various code phrases of UN Security Council Resolutions ("concerned that," "deeply regretting," "gravely alarmed," "strongly condemns"; "requests," "urges," "demands") offer a precise set of escalated distinctions for the seriousness with which an action is viewed by the Security Council. Likewise, withdrawing an ambassador for "consultations" is no small matter, when done in a public fashion in response to a particular event. Finally, debates about the shape of conference tables, the order of agendas, and the procedures for decision-making are all crucial to the smooth and predictable functioning of the international diplomatic culture.

Some authors (including some in this collection) have concluded from the existence of a nearly-universally shared diplomatic culture that cultural elements (writ large) play almost no role in international relations. Diplomats learn the same "language, often have attended the same schools, travel in a fairly tight international circle, and repeatedly encounter each other in different context. To anyone who has observed the unfolding of a multilateral meeting or conference, or read the traffic associated with it, the steps taken appear fairly precise and even predictable, without regard for differing socio-cultural backgrounds. As I. William Zartman and Maureen Berman put it, "by now the world has established an international diplomatic culture that soon socializes its members into similar behavior."¹⁹

¹⁷ The first two examples are from Kevin Avruch and Peter W. Black, "The Culture Question and Conflict Resolution," *Peace and Change*, 16 (1991), 29, the third from Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures*, 13. As Avruch and Black (30) point out, this uniform view of culture "can lead to the attempt to pigeonhole behavior into a pattern assumed to be standard for all members of the social group. Cohen also usefully points out that a set of attributes may differ radically from context to context: the way Indians deal with Westerners is not the way they deal with their smaller neighbours.

¹⁸ For some details see Raymond Cohen, *International Politics: The Rules of the Game* (London: Longman, 1981); Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); R.C. Feltham, *Diplomatic Handbook*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1977).

¹⁹ I. William Zartman and Maureen Berman, *The Practical Negotiator* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 226.